

**The representation of marginalized voices and trauma in selected novels
of Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera**

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and I have acknowledged all the sources I have used.

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ABSTRACT

My thesis focuses on the representation of marginalized voices and trauma in the selected fiction of Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera. I analyze three novels written by the Yvonne Vera—*Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue*(1996) and *The Stone Virgins*(2002) set during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle period and postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident era respectively and *Nervous Conditions*(1988) and its sequel, *The Book of Not* (1996), by Dangarembga set during the 1960s to 1970s colonial Rhodesia period (the colonial name for Zimbabwe) and during the period of white-minority rule in Rhodesia to the attainment of independence in 1980.

I analyze these novels from the feminist/womanist, gender and postcolonial literary models. The rationale for grouping these theoretical models in the analysis in this thesis is that they commonly highlight from a gender perspective the complex factors which oppress and marginalize women in the colonial and postcolonial contexts in which the two authors set their writings. These literary paradigms highlight the oppression of women from an African perspective and all acknowledge the need to address all factors which oppress and subordinate women (gender, race, class) if total emancipation for them is to be achieved. I also posit that Vera and Dangarembga offer discourses that challenge the silencing of narratives of oppression and violation in their novels selected for analysis in this thesis.

The thesis has five chapters. In Chapter 1, I set out the argument of the thesis and give a brief history of gendered colonialism and the historical period which provides a setting for the fiction of the two authors. Next, I describe the conceptual framework I will use in analyzing the works of the two postcolonial Zimbabwe female writers. Then I will outline the research questions and hypothesis and expose the research methodology and approach that will serve as my vehicle for data collection, analysis and interpretation.

In Chapter 2, I will focus on gender, class and race and discuss the ways Dangarembga explores these factors in *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not*. I will also discuss innovative ways women explore to champion their freedom and voice in the fiction of Dangarembga. Chapter 3 focuses on the novels of Yvonne Vera— *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins* —which articulate narratives of violated subjects and silenced voices. I will discuss the ways Vera explores to show how narratives of violated subjects are silenced by patriarchy, colonialism and masculine narratives of nationalism in these novels. Chapter 4 focuses on narratives of trauma. Using theories of trauma, I will analyze *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins* by Vera and show how these narratives articulate colonial and postcolonial trauma and female child trauma. I will also discuss *The Book of Not* by Dangarembga and show how the novel articulates colonial and racial trauma. My discussion of the novels of Vera and Dangarembga in this chapter will show that these novels work out traumatic experiences in the colonial and postcolonial eras and will also reveal the challenges of representing tra

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving mother, Drapper; my dear wife, Angeline and my wonderful two kids, Kudzai and Kundai.

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this part of the thesis, I give a brief history of gendered colonialism and the historical period which provides a setting for the selected fiction of Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera which I focus on in this research. Next, I describe the conceptual framework I intend to use in analyzing the selected novels of the two aforementioned female Zimbabwean authors. Then I will outline the research questions and hypothesis that will direct my research objective of probing the ways these two writers create womanist spaces that represent different forms of marginality; violation and silencing imposed by the dominant social and colonial systems in the postcolonial context and expose the research methodology and approach that will serve as my vehicle for data collection, analysis and interpretation.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The objective of this research is to examine the ways Dangarembga and Vera represent marginalized voices and trauma in their fiction I have selected for this study. The novels of the aforementioned authors I analyze in this research are set in the colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwean contexts. Four of the five novels—*Nervous Conditions* (1988) and its sequel *The Book of Not* (2006) by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *Without a Name* (1994) and *Under the Tongue* (1996) by Yvonne Vera are set in colonial Rhodesia (the colonial name for Zimbabwe) and they unfold against the background of the Zimbabwe Second *Chimurenga* (the liberation struggle) while *The Stone Virgins* (2002) by Yvonne Vera is set in the postcolonial dissident era (1980—1985) which is known in Zimbabwean history as *Gukurahundi* (the first rains which sweep away the chuff left after thrashing grains). I now give a brief historical background of the historical background which provides a setting to the imaginative writings of these authors.

Zimbabwe became a British colony after the British South Africa Company invaded and colonized the area in 1890 through the Pioneer Column which was led by John Cecil Rhodes, the influential British imperialist from whom the colony got the name Rhodesia in 1895. Until 1965, the colony was known as Southern Rhodesia and thereafter up to 1980, as Rhodesia (Mlambo 2014:1). The Heinemann English Dictionary (2001:187) defines a colony as “a country settled in and developed by another and remaining under its control”. The Pioneer Column was a formation of British military troops which invaded and colonized this area between Limpopo and Zambezi where they established the British colony. It comprised the British forces and their main components the ‘Pioneer Corps’, members of the British South Africa Police, and Ngwato mercenaries (Brits, Concise Dictionary of Historical and Political Terms 1995:194).

Edward Said (1993:8) in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2000:40) define imperialism as the practice, theory, and the attitudes of a domineering metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” and add that “colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territories” while Grosfoguel et al (2014:7) view colonialism as the presence of Western colonial administrations *on the colonies* (my own emphasis). Zimbabwe remained under British subjugation until 1980 when it attained its political independence and majority government. The political independence was won after a “long protracted war which claimed more than fifty-thousand lives” (Martin and Johnson 1981:188).

Vera and Dangarembga deal explicitly with colonial themes and colonial experience in their novels although they write in the postcolonial Zimbabwean context. Postcolonial literature is the literature produced in the postcolonial era in countries which were formerly colonized by the European countries as was the case with Zimbabwe. According to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (1995:3), postcolonial literature covers literature from post-independence and is primarily concerned with hegemonic racism, gender politics, place and displacement. They argue that

What each of these literatures has in common beyond
their special and distinctive regional characteristics is

that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to investigate the underlying factors for female oppression, subordination and marginalization of their voices in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. This will give an insight into the understanding of inequalities inherent in the social and economic systems as well as how these inequalities are entrenched in the postcolonial setting. The intent is also to find out how Yvonne Vera and Tsitsi Dangarembga engage with these factors within the African context in their selected fiction set in the colonial and postcolonial contexts I focus on in this research. I shall discuss the ways the two authors engage with the themes of female oppression, domination, marginalization of their voice within a violent gendered colonial environment against a deeply patriarchal society. I show that the authors foreground feminist/womanist discourse that challenges gender, race and class oppression of women and champions their emancipation and voice from a woman perspective. Maria Lugones (2014) asserts that the concept of gender was introduced by Western colonizers and became a tool for domination that designates two binary oppositions and hierarchical social categories; women became defined by their subordinate relation to men in all categories. Colonization thereby created the concepts race and gender, the imposition of race accompanied the inferiorisation of the indigenous and the imposition of gender accompanied the inferiorisation of indigenous women (notes accessed online <http://globaltheory.org/wp-content in 2015>).

The research will establish that gender violence is inherent in the social and historical setting of Vera and Dangarembga's fiction. Both Vera and Dangarembga explore the issue of gender violence in the social and historical settings of their novels I analyze in this research and argue

that gender is the basis on which women are oppressed and exploited. According to Ryaewin Collenn (2014), gendered violence played a formative role in the shaping of colonial societies. She argues that colonization was a gendered act, carried out by imperial workforces, overwhelmingly men, drawn from masculinized occupations such as soldiering and long-distance trade. The rape of women of colonized societies was part of the conquest. The colonial state was built as a power structure operated by men based on continuing force. Brutality was built into colonial societies (Connell 2014 in notes accessed online <http://globalsocialtheory.org/wp-> accessed in 2015). All Vera's novels I will discuss in this thesis explore the brutal rape of women (and girls) in violent gendered colonial and postcolonial contexts—In *Without a Name* Mazvita is violently raped by a guerrilla fighter while the war of political liberation is raging on, in *Under the Tongue* the child heroine Zhizha is brutally raped by her father when the country is engulfed in the liberation struggle and in *The Stone Virgins* Thenjiwe and Nonceba are decapitated, mutilated and violently sexually abused respectively by the dissident Sibaso.

I intend to show that gender, race and class are the causes of women oppression and subordination and assert that these factors account for the social and racial inequalities inherent in the current social and economic systems in the postcolonial context their novels are set in.

1.4 AUTHORS' PROFILES AND SYNOPSES OF THEIR NOVELS

1.4.1 VERA

The late Yvonne Vera was born in Bulawayo in colonial Rhodesia. Her literary project spans the entire Zimbabwean history from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era (Ranger 2005:1). Her literary output establishes her as arguably the most prolific post-colonial Zimbabwean female writer. Vera's first creative work is a collection of short stories entitled *Why Don't We Carve Other Animals* which was published in 1992. This was followed by five novels which are *Nehanda* (1993), *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996), *Butterfly Burning* (1998) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). Yvonne Vera has been compared with another late Zimbabwean author, Dambudzo Marechera, by many critics because of her daring approach to subject matter, bold use of language, a symbolic style and willingness to use the

surreal in her fiction (Brickfield 2005:13; Landow 2003: 1; Primorac 2004:165). I give a synopsis of her novels below.

(a) WITHOUT A NAME

Without a Name is set in colonial Rhodesia during the height of the Zimbabwe Second Chimurenga. It tells the tragic story the brutal rape of Mazvita by a guerrilla fighter. Mazvita is distraught and dehumanized by the brutal act so she flees Mubaira heading to Harare where she hopes to get security and freedom. As she runs away, a village behind the river goes up in flames (p31).

On the way, she sojourns at a farm where she stays with Nyenyedzi. Mazvita resumes her journey and proceeds to Harare. On arrival, she moves in with Joel (p56). Mazvita soon discovers that she is pregnant with the rapist's child. She decides to hide the pregnancy from Joel (p74) but he soon discovers it. This changes the complexion of her relationship with him and he tells her to leave. In desperation, Mazvita commits a crime of infanticide.

(b) UNDER THE TONGUE

Under the Tongue tells the tragic story of the incestuous rape of Zhizha by her father Muroyiwa, a self-styled war hero, and it is set at the height of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle. The brutal rape severely affects Zhizha physically and psychologically and she loses both her memory and speech.

The brutal rape of Zhizha takes place during the absence of her mother Runyarao. She only comes home to avenge her daughter's sexual violation by killing her husband. Grandmother is a tower of strength to Zhizha and she is instrumental in her recovery of memory. Grandmother reawakens Zhizha's memory by sharing with her the story of the death of her son, Tonderai, who died when he was a child. It is a story of pain, sorrow and loss. She stresses the power of words to Zhizha the power of words and the importance of articulating the painful past experiences so as to heal and recover. She tells her that we choose words, not silence. By opening up to her, she makes her understand the history of suffering that women have. Her mother, who returns later, helps Zhizha to recover her speech.

(c) THE STONE VIRGINS

The Stone Virgins is set in the postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident era (1980—1985) and it explores the gruesome and grisly crimes committed on civilians during that era. In the story, the dissident Sibaso beheads Thejiwe and rapes and mutilates her young sister, Nonceba, in Kezi, a small township outside Bulawayo. Thantabantu Store in that area is burnt down and the storekeeper, Mahlathini, and several residents are cold-bloodedly killed. The residents of Kezi who witness these brutal and grisly crimes are severely traumatized and the odor of charred bodies stay in their minds forever (pages 133—134).

The text also articulates the brutal bizarre atrocities committed by the dissidents during the turbulent period and explores the physical and psychological damages suffered by victims and witnesses. In one of these gruesome and horrific scenes, a woman is forced by soldiers to axe her husband while her two sons watch. Her pleas and wails fail on the deaf ears of the soldiers. Her husband asks her to do as the soldiers instruct her to do and she axes him (pages 88—89).

Vera explores the pain, wounds and scars that innocent civilians sustained during the postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident era that through the tragic story of the decapitation of Thenjiwe and the mutilation and gross sexual violation of Nonceba. By exploring these psychological wounds and scars, Vera reveals a history of pain that is often glossed over by official versions of the country's history. Vera's *The Stone Virgins* breaks silence on the dissident movement or *Gukurahundi* atrocities and trauma as they are referred to in Zimbabwean history. *Gukurahundi* which in Shona means the rains which wash away chaff after the thrashing of grain symbolically refers to the rooting out of remnants or the 'supposed traitors among former soldiers of ZIPRA' (Holmes and Orner 2010:16 in Mangena 2015:40).

1.4.2DANGAREMBGA

Tsitsi Dangarembga was born in colonial Rhodesia. She left the country for England with her parents and returned towards independence. She went back to Britain for medical training at Cambridge University but did not complete the course because she was "profoundly discouraged by the implicit and explicit racism...and concerned for the well-being of her family and country during the armed struggle for independence"(Wiley and Treiber 2002:xi in Katwiwa Mule, 2006). Tsitsi Dangarembga's literary career started with the publication of a

play entitled *She No Longer Weeps* in 1987. This was followed by a novel *Nervous Conditions* in 1988. The long-awaited sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, *The Book of Not*, was published eighteen years later in 2006. According to Zhuwarara (2001:235), Dangarembga is the “first female writer in Zimbabwe to write a full length novel in English which deliberately foregrounds gender relations in a patriarchal and colonial society of then Rhodesia.” Below I give a synopsis of her novels.

(a)NERVOUS CONDITIONS

Nervous Conditions is set in colonial Rhodesia (the colonial name for Zimbabwe) in the 1960s up to 1970s and it probes the patriarchal and colonial domination of women by exploring the lives of different groups of women. The main story is that of Tambudzai Sigauke, also known as Tambu, an underprivileged rural girl who struggles for her education after she is forced out of primary school because the little money available in the family is not enough to keep both her and her brother Nhamo in school. Her brother is allowed to continue with education because he is a male child.

Tambu approaches her father about her plight with regards to her education and he tells her that she should not worry about education because she is a girl. He suggests that she should stay at home and learn to cook, clean the house and grow vegetables (p15). She decides to seek help from her mother but to her disappointment her mother supports what her father has said. Her mother tells her that her father is right because even Maiguru, her educated and well off aunt, knows how to cook, clean and grow vegetables (p16). Tambu is resolved to go back to school so she grows maize to raise money for her school fees. She resumes her primary education after a lady whom she meets in town when she goes to sell her mealies with Mr Matamba donates ten pounds towards her education. Tambu father demands the money donated to Tambu arguing that sending Tambu to school is a waste of money because she does not stay in the royal family forever as she will be married but Matimba refuse and gives the money to the headmaster.

When Babamukuru comes back home from England where he and his wife, Maiguru, have been studying, he chooses Nhamo to go and learn at the mission where he is a headmaster. He chooses Nhamo because he is a male child and he argues that Nhamo should be given the best education so that he can help to emancipate his family from the abject poverty it is

trapped in. Babamukuru also saves money for Dambudzo, Tambu's youngest brother, arguing that when he reaches school-going age he should be well provided for because he is the only male child in that family. Tambu gets an opportunity for education when Babamukuru takes her to go and learn at the mission after the tragic death of Nhamo.

The fact that Tambu gets the opportunity for education through the death of Nhamo prompts her to make the declaratory statement in the opening of her narrative that: 'I was not sorry when my brother died' (p1). Tambu also learns at an early age that the rights and wishes of women are not recognized in her family when she remarks that: 'The needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate' (NCp12). Tambu's move to the mission where she stays with her Anglicized cousin, Nyasha, transforms her from being the rural ingenuous child with an uncritical attitude to an observant and critical person. Through the influence of Nyasha who has a dynamic personality and critical attitude, Tambu begins to look at things critically and question things which hitherto she had not had courage to question including standing up against the authority of Babamukuru, her benefactor she has always shown reverence and blind loyalty to.

Dangarembga also highlights the social and economic problems women grapple with in a patriarchal and gendered colonial society through the lives of the other women the novel tells—Mashingayi, Tambu's mother; Lucia, Ma'shingayi's young sister; Maiguru, Tambu's educated and well off aunt and Nyasha, Tambu's Anglicized and headstrong cousin sister. The book also critiques the discriminatory colonial education system which oppressed and marginalized black students through its unjust enrollment policy and unfair racial practices.

(b) THE BOOK OF NOT

The Book of Not is a sequel to *Nervous Conditions* and is set in the period from white-minority rule in Rhodesia to the attainment of political independence and the establishment of black majority government in 1980. While the novel articulates war atrocities and explores the physical and psychological damages suffered by war victims and witnesses, it specifically critiques the racial oppression of blacks in colonial Rhodesia from the perspective of Tambudzai Sigauke (known as Tambu in the story) and six other black students at The Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart, Ntombizethu (Ntombi), Irene, Anastasia, Benhilda, Patience and Cynthia—members of the 'African dormitory'.

The story is narrated by Tambudzai Sigauke who is also the protagonist of the story and opens with a frightening scene at a *morari* (night gathering) in which Netsai, Tambu's young sister and a guerrilla fighter, steps on a landmine and her leg is blown off. The piece of the leg spins in air and hooks on a tree branch where it continues to bleed. This happens while Babamukuru, for whom the *morari* has been convened, is being brutally beaten by VanaMukoma (Big Brothers) who accuse him of being a sellout. Tambu is told by her mother before the night of the gathering that she must not tell what she hears or sees; she should keep silent. This makes her try to shut her senses when she attends the gathering lest she might say what she has seen or heard.

The Book of Not works out war and racial trauma by exploring the traumatic experiences of traumatized subjects. After witnessing the horrific scene at the *morari*, Tambu and the other villagers who were there are severely traumatized. When Tambu returns to school, she is continually haunted by visions of the terrifying *morari* scene in which her young sister's leg is blown off and spins in air and hooks on a branch of a tree where it continues to bleed. The text also articulates the psychological effects of colonial and racial ideologies on black subjects by exploring the relationship between black students and white students and staff at the convent.

The novel explores the extent of the physical and psychological damages suffered by war victims and those who witnessed the war atrocities through the use of images of broken objects. Before attending the night gathering, Tambu examines objects at the homestead. She touches a broken upturned wheelbarrow beaten to lace by wind and rain, exams the twisted axel of a scotch cart—the things that break and cannot be fixed because the force of wholeness has abdicated (TBNp9). The broken objects Tambu examines are symbolic of the extent of the physical and psychological damages suffered by war victims and those who witnessed the atrocities.

The setting of the novel shifts from the village *morari* to Sacred Heart, a racially polarized multiracial private school where Tambu and five other African girls learn. It exposes the shortcomings of the colonial education system by examining the discriminatory enrollment policy which allowed only two African students to be enrolled from the hundreds of African students who wrote Grade seven in the whole country and the unjust racial policies which did

not allow black students at government institutions. When there is a shortage of A' Level teachers at Tambu's school, an arrangement is made for the students to be taken by a bus every day to Umtali Boys' High for science lessons but Tambu is not allowed to join her class of white students because she is black. The novel also explores all racial practices which alienated blacks at the convent.

The Book of Not establishes that racial oppression compounds the situation of black women who already have social oppression to contend with. The text reveals the factors which account for the inherent inequalities in the social and economic systems in the postcolonial context she writes in.

1.5 RATIONALE FOR PAIRING VERA AND DANGAREMBGA

Critics have analyzed the imaginative writings of Vera and Dangarembga before but they have tended to either focus on these authors individually or pair them with other contemporary female Zimbabwean authors such as Nozipho Maraire, Petina Gappah or other African writers. Departing from the social features historically binding Yvonne Vera and Tsitsi Dangarembga together within Zimbabwean social emancipation for me provides a rationale for grouping them together. Both authors commonly highlight from a woman perspective the oppression, domination, marginalization, victimization and silencing of women by social and colonial structures and ideologies.

The joint study of the fiction of Vera and Dangarembga in this research is inspired by the fact that both authors are postcolonial black women writers who probe the factors which commonly oppress black women in the same social and historical settings from an African perspective. The authors also explore the subject of trauma which I jointly investigate with representation of marginalized voices in their fiction I analyze in this thesis. Furthermore, while Vera and Dangarembga acknowledge that the struggle for women emancipation should of necessity focus on sexual domination, they believe that it should more broadly include the socio-economic and racial realities in the greater society if total emancipation of them is to be achieved.

Both authors protest against oppressive ideologies and all other forms of injustices which affect women. According to Kolawale (1997:153), "Much of African women literature is about

change and that change is effected through literary creativity". Vera and Dangarembga use their imaginative writing to question systems and structures which oppress women and argue for the total emancipation of women from all oppressive structures and ideologies, the objective and vision advanced by the African feminist /womanist, gender and postcolonial perspectives within which I situate the fiction of these two Zimbabwean female authors in this research. The two authors are also paired because they share the same vision in their literary projects of putting to an end all forms of female oppression and domination and reaffirming their central roles in the society by recovering their silenced discourses, a central objective of the African feminist/womanist, gender and postcolonial frameworks I analyze their fiction from.

The two authors are also jointly critiqued in this study because they are African women who articulate the subject of women oppression and emancipation from an African perspective within the framework of African feminist/ womanist and postcolonial frameworks. African women literature started with the first crop of African writers such as Flora Nwapa, Maria Ba and Buchi Emecheta, to mention but just a few.

African authors have used their voice to raise important issues that affect Black women (James, 1990 cited in Collins 2001:3). The issues include, inter alia, racialism, classism, sexuality and gender. Karik-Namiji Olubuloka (2016:18) concurs with the views of James in the following remarks: "the African woman has a great struggle against domination and subjugation because of the circumstances which surround her (Gender, Race, Class)". These are issues which Vera and Dangarembga articulate in their fiction I analyze in this dissertation.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this dissertation, I analyze the selected fiction of Vera and Dangarembga from the African feminist/ womanist, gender and postcolonial theoretical models. The rationale for grouping these theoretical paradigms in this research is that they all commonly highlight from a gender perspective the complex social and political factors which oppress and marginalize women as well as silence their discourses in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. The theoretical paradigms also provide a useful analytical framework for the reading of the fiction of Vera and Dangarembga in this dissertation because they all acknowledge the need to address the

multiple oppressive factors which African women grapple with in the colonial and postcolonial contexts namely gender, class and race.

Vera and Dangarembga foreground gender discourse in their imaginative writings I focus in this thesis. They articulate issues which affect black women from an African perspective and advance the objectives and social vision which link well with those advanced by the African feminist/womanist, gender and postcolonial analytical tools. The two postcolonial writers offer discourses which contest the marginalization and silencing of women narratives and voice. They do so by creating women spaces in their fiction which question all oppressive structures and ideologies which oppress and marginalize women narratives and voices in the social and historical contexts their novels are set. In *Opening Women's Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women's Writing*, Yvonne Vera claims that: "If speaking is still difficult to negotiate, then writing has created a free space for most women—much freer than speech" (Vera 1993:3).

The African feminist/womanist, gender and postcolonial analytical tools explore the factors which affect African women from an African perspective. They provide a useful analytical framework for the reading of the imaginative writings of Vera and Dangarembga in this research because the two writers are Africanists and their artistic works are inspired by African feminist/womanist ideology. Both writers write their literary works from an African/Afrocentric perspective. African critics and scholars such as Rafapa (2006:10) view Afrocentricism as an attitude that directly combats European hegemonic discourse in order to negate its inherent Eurocentrism as a pole diametrically opposed to that associated with Africanists. An African is defined as one belonging to groups that have been historically referred to as blacks, coloureds and Indians within the South African context (Maphahlele cited in Rafapa et al 2011:113).

Both Vera and Dangarembga foreground feminist/womanist discourses in their writings I analyze in this research. Therefore, employing the analytical tools outlined above in the reading of their fiction is ideal because they are paradigms which are informed by the objectives and vision of feminism. Hull, Scot and Smith (1982) argue that the term feminist had been used to describe women who possess a feminist consciousness. According to Gatwiri and McLaren (2016:264), the notion of African feminist can be extended to describe

“anyone who negotiates with and between the ideologies of “Africanness” and Feminism/s. Vera and Dangarembga show feminist consciousness in their writings I analyze in this research by foregrounding women discourses from a woman perspective and empowering female protagonists and other female characters depicted in their fiction with narrative power. Equipping female characters with narrative power allows women to voice their oppressive conditions and achieve voice and social emancipation.

The African feminism/ womanism and Postcolonial theoretical frameworks all theorize the experiences of African women from a gender perspective. According to Garcia (2012:6), a gender perspective is an analytical tool that is used to understand the causes of feminine subordination and the factors that perpetuate it. The concept of gender as a tool of analysis is closely related to feminism as both perspectives share the same vision of liberating women from oppression and enhancing their rights. Both these theoretical perspectives acknowledge that women are oppressed on the basis of their gender through the social systems, structures, practices and ideologies. These theoretical models provide a useful analytical framework for the reading of the fiction of Dangarembga and Vera I focus on in this research because the women values they espouse and the objectives they advance are the same as those espoused and advanced by these two postcolonial Zimbabwe female writers.

The feminist movement began with the rise of awareness of women as a social group historically oppressed by a patriarchal system and it was a turning point of what would be later known as the first wave feminism. It sought to understand the causes of feminine subordination and the factors that perpetuate it (Garcia 2012 in Espolea A.C www.espolea.orginfo@espolea.org). Serret (2008:51) concedes that adopting a gender perspective in the theorization of women experiences implies a feminist view as a starting point while Olubuloka (2016:20) asserts that, “Feminist criticism and African women have the ideological focus of female assertion”. Vera and Dangarembga adopt a firm stance against oppression of women in all spheres of their lives in their fiction selected for analysis in this dissertation. They have the same ideological focus of female assertion as seen in the strong female protagonists they construct in their fiction who assert their freedom and voice.

Vera and Dangarembga are black African women writers whose writings are deeply inspired by the issues which affect black African women in the social, political and historical contexts

in which they write. They foreground feminine discourse in their writings from the African perspective. Dangarembga defines feminine as women writing about the things which move them and she says that female writing comes from the consciousness of being a woman and the problems that arise as a result of that. By her own submission, Western feminism does not inspire her. She says, "The Western white feminism does not meet my experiences at a certain point, the issues of me as a black woman. The black American female writers touch more of me than the white ones"(Veid-Wild 1989:106). Tsitsi Dangarembga's feminist consciousness has been influenced by black American female writers such as Alice Walker and Audre Lorde. Consequently, Dangarembga's feminist consciousness influenced Vera's brand of feminism and that of other Zimbabwean female writers as well as African women writers in general.

Feminism is an ideology which aims to put to an end all forms of female oppression and subordination and seeks to achieve total emancipation for all women. Burrow and Milburn (1999:128) see feminism as a label for a "commitment or movement to achieve equality for women" while bell hooks (2006:26) defines it as an ideology which seeks to end women's oppression. According to Obiola (2016:13), "Feminism is the principle that stipulates that women be given political, economic and social rights equal to men. It is also the movement that seeks to raise vibrant women who will be culturally influential and politically powerful". It supports recommendations about how to improve the situation of women (Frye 2000:195 cited in Sun Shuang 2009:25). All the above definitions echo the same central objective of feminism—to end all forms of female oppression and subordination in all spheres of life and achieve total emancipation for them.

Feminism ideology originated among the middle-class white women in the West and the terms Western Feminism or Mainstream Feminism are used interchangeably to refer to this strand of feminism. According to Jessica Fisher (2013), "The terms 'Western', 'Western Feminism' and 'Mainstream Feminism' refer to ideas and cultures founded upon European ideas espoused mostly within Europe and North America"(notes accessed online August 2016 beingfeministblog.wordpress.com) The feminist movement is divided into three waves or periods. Krolokke (2006:1) identifies these phases as follows: The first movement which began in the 19th century and developed up to the early 20th century and focused on women's right of voting, inheritance, access to education and the job market. The second wave which

began in the early 1960s and lasted until the late 1980s and sought to address inequality laws and cultural inequalities such as childcare, abortion, job market, among others. The third wave is seen as a reaction to the shortcomings of the second wave of feminist movement and it began in the early 1990s and has continued till now. Dangarembga and Vera's brand of feminism is situated within this third wave.

African and African American women criticize Western feminism or Mainstream for its shortcomings. Postcolonial feminists such as Mohanty (1991) opines that Western feminism is ethnocentric and isolationist. Ethnocentrism is the view that one's own group is the centre of everything and that all things are judged based on one's own group (Elvira Craig de Silva 2004: 7). Mainstream feminism is also criticized for treating the category of woman as homogeneous and not heterogeneous. Mohanty (1991a:4) argues that divisions of class, religion, sexuality and history are found in all women across the globe, a view other prominent feminists who include Angela Davis, Alice Walker and bell hooks concur with (Shuang Sun 2009:27). The omission of the oppression of women based on classicism and racism in the theorization of their experiences is another major flaw of Mainstream feminism cited by African and African American scholars, critics and theorists.

The label feminist has been associated with various problems. It has engendered ambivalent feelings among non-western women. Most black women are not comfortable with the label feminist because of the western overtones it carries. According to Olubukola (2016:22), "Prominent African female writers like Ama Ata Aidoo, Bessie Head, Flora Nwapa, Zaynab Alkali, Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo, and Maria Ba have all at one time rejected the title feminist". According to Dryden et al (2002:114 in Rafapa 2011:112), "feminism has also received negative publicity in social contexts from the press to the extent of feminists being labeled lesbians and misogynists". The shortcomings of mainstream feminism and the problems associated with the label feminist have prompted African and African American scholars and critics to develop literary paradigms which address the issues of black woman from an African perspective. I will briefly look at some of these theoretical models I use in this research below.

In this dissertation, I analyze the selected novels of Vera and Dangarembga from Postcolonial feminist, African feminism/Womanism and gender theories. These analytical tools all address issues which affect black women from an African perspective. Postcolonial feminism is a

literary theory which developed out of the colonial history of African women. The ideology seeks to probe the different forms of women oppression and marginality. It argues that oppression related to colonial experience, particularly racial, class, and ethnic oppression has marginalized women in postcolonial societies. This ideology is important in my analysis of the fiction of Vera and Dangarembga because the factors which it highlights in its theorization of women experiences in postcolonial context such as class, race and patriarchy are the issues which Vera and Dangarembga probe in their fiction which I analyze in this research.

African feminism is an ideology which examines and outlines the factors which cause male domination of women within a gendered environment. The Charter of Feminist Principles (2006:5) outlines its objectives and reaffirms its position when it declared that African Feminists are part of the global movements that aim to dismantle patriarchy in all its manifestations but with a careful understanding that patriarchy varies in time and space according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global imperial relationships and structures (Gatwiri and McLaren 2016:266). According to Davis and Graves (1986:8 in Gatwiri and McLaren 2016:266), the African feminism is a political philosophy that recognizes a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation, which differ from the generalized oppression of all African peoples.

Given the problems associated with Western feminism, African feminism is an ideal African analytical tool. It recognizes that certain inequalities and limitations existed/exist in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others (cited in Gatwiri and McLaren 2016: 266). The ideology is relevant in the analysis of the selected fiction of Vera and Dangarembga because it explores and espouses the social issues which African women struggle against on a daily basis within the African context. African feminism examines African societies for institutions, which are of value to women, rejects those, which work to their detriment, and does not simply import Western women's agendas (Davis and Graves 1986: 8 in Gatwiri and McLaren 2016:266).

Womanism is a literary theory which developed as a reaction to the shortcomings of Mainstream feminism especially its exclusion of the oppression of women based on racialism

and classism in its theorization of their experiences. The term womanism was originally used by Alice Walker in her 1983 collection of short stories entitled *In Search of our Mother's Garden: Womanist prose*. According to Walker (1983:7), the term womanist is derived from the southern folk expression "acting womanish" and she describes a womanist as follows:

A black feminist or feminist of colour...A woman who loves other women sexually. She appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility...[she] is committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically for health. Traditionally universalist. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves moon. Loves spirit. Regardless; womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender (Alice Walker x1-x11).

From Walker's definition of womanism above some key ideas can be deduced. Womanists are universalists because of the metaphor of a garden in which all flowers bloom equally, there should be unity among men and women which is captured by the notion that the ideology is not a separatist and, lastly, feminism is a component of the broad concept womanism, an idea suggested in the phrase "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender". According to Patricia Collins Hills (1996:10), Black women are 'womanist' while white women remain merely 'feminist'.

The concept of womanism has been adopted and broadened by other womanists within the African context to include other important aspects with regard to the African women and their struggle for emancipation from all oppressive systems and ideologies. Chikwenye Okonje Ogunyemi (1996:114) broadens the version of this ideology and argues that the philosophy is "necessitated by African women's inclusive mother-centred ideology, with its focus on caring familial, communal, national and international. In her seminal work published in *Signs Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English*, she offers a critique of the extent to which the western whites have ignored the realities and locations of African women. She coined the term womanism as an alternative to feminism, arguing that African men and women have been united in a struggle against colonialism. The womanism developed by Alice Walker whose scope was later expanded by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi provides an ideal framework for analyzing women issues expounded by Vera and Dangarembga in this research because it offers a broad framework from an African perspective within which to discuss the issues Vera and Dangarembga espouse in their fiction.

African feminism / womanism and postcolonial theoretical paradigms expound the issues that hamper the total emancipation of women within the African context. They do not reduce the oppression or subjugation of women to only sexism, a flaw Western feminism and radical feminism are mainly criticized for. Both African feminism and Womanism acknowledge that African women are oppressed and subordinated by many complex factors such as race, class, gender and sexism. Analyzing the fiction of Vera and Dangarembga using these theoretical lenses provides a broad perspective within which to examine these different factors which oppress women and marginalize their voice in the colonial and postcolonial contexts in this research.

I investigate the representation of marginalized subjects and trauma together in the selected fiction of Dangarembga and Vera in this research because these issues are jointly interrogated in postcolonial context in which the aforementioned authors write. Based on the theory of trauma which combines well with gender and feminism/womanism within the postcolonial context emphasizing subjective agency, in which the two female authors write, I will interrogate the representation of trauma.

The study of the representation of trauma in literature mostly draws from Freudian psychoanalysis. Two key ideas derived from Freud used in the study of trauma are 'acting out' and 'working through'. According to LaCapra(2001:6), The concepts of 'working out' and 'working through' are connected to the Freudian terms of 'melancholia' and 'mourning', two possible psychological reactions related to loss. The process of acting out is shown when the traumatized person experiences dreams, nightmares, flashbacks, illusions or hallucinations of the traumatic event. The process of acting out is also identified when the victim tries to re-experience the traumatic event. Critics argue that when the traumatized person is acting out after a traumatic experience, he or she has not yet reached the stage of coming to terms with the experience and the emotions involved in the trauma.

The process of acting through is often seen as working in the case of historical trauma. Acting out can also be seen as the process of working through in order for victims of trauma to recover or get a closure of that horrific episode in their lives. In this process of recovery by the victim, memory is crucial. In their article "*The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma* (in Caruth, 1995:176", Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart

write that “complete recovery” can only take place when “the story can be told, the person can look back at what happened; he has given it place in his life history, his autobiography, and thereby in the whole of his personality”.

I posit in this thesis that the tragic situations Vera portrays her female protagonists in—the rape of Mazvita by a Rhodesian soldier in *Without a Name* and the burning of a village, the incestuous rape of Zhizha by her father Muroyiwa in *Under the Tongue*, the decapitation, rape and mutilation of Thenjiwe and Nonceba by Sibaso respectively and the burning of a whole community in *The Stone Virgins* are stories re-narrated in order to give the tragedy a place in the life history of the individual victims and the nation as a whole so as to initiate a process of recovery and healing. Similarly, the story of Tambudzai Sigauke in Dangarembga’s fiction of colonial and racial trauma, *The Book of Not*, is therapeutic to victims of trauma. Narratives of violence and trauma are crucial in addressing individual colonial and national trauma in the contexts in which Vera and Dangarembga’s novels I focus on in this research are set.

The act of testimony is vital in the process of working through. Trauma narrative affects not only the victim, but also the reader of the narrative or the one witnessing it. According to Dori Laub(1992:62), the listener becomes himself a witness, to both the witnesses of others and to the process of witnessing, a process which often results in the listener being emotionally affected or “unsettled” by the victim’s testimony. LaCapra(2001) developed the term “emphatic unsettlement” to describe this process whereby the listener is emotionally affected in the process of witnessing to trauma.

This dissertation reveals that both Dangarembga and Vera portray protagonists who are emotionally affected through witnessing traumatic events. This is clear in the case of Tambudzai Sigauke in Dangarembga’s *The Book of Not* who is deeply affected by her witnessing of the blowing off of her sister’s leg at a meeting convened to discipline her uncle, Babamukuru, who is accused of selling out during the liberation struggle. The case of Nonceba who is deeply traumatized by watching the decapitation of her sister, Thenjiwe, by Sibaso in *The Stone Virgins* is another example. These incidents haunt the witnesses forever.

LaCapra (2001:78) distinguishes emphatic unsettlement, which he calls the “virtual” experience, from what he calls the “vicarious” emphatic experience. The former is a situation in which “one puts oneself in the other’s position while recognizing the difference of that

position and hence not taking the other's place while the latter provokes a full identification with the speaker, which is unhealthy reaction. Felman and Laub(1992:2) observe that emphatic unsettlement can be experienced by the reader of a written trauma narrative and they call this type of narrative a "life -testimony". According to Felman and Laub (1992), this should be seen as a "textual testimony which can penetrate us like an actual life. However, Kali Tal in *Words of Hurt* (1996) says that even during the process of witnessing testimony, it is not possible for the hearer or listener to experience a vicarious trauma and argues below:

[If] the goal is to convey the traumatic experience, no second -hand rendering of it is adequate. The horrific events that have reshaped the author's construction of reality can only be described in literature, not recreated. Only the experience of trauma has the traumatizing effect [...] Caught forever in this luminal state, the survivor comes to *represent* the shattering of *our national myths*, without being able to shatter the reader's individual personal myths. And it is those *personal* myths that support and uphold the most widely accepted national ones. (Tal 1996: 121)

Some theorists of trauma argue that the readers' or hearers' personal myths can only be changed by a genuine traumatic experience. Tal is among the theorists of trauma who argue that the myths of the readers and hearers can only be changed by a genuine traumatic experience. Consequently, rather than promoting an active hearer who undergoes emphatic unsettlement, Tal advocates an emotional distance between therapist and patient. With that purpose she compares both Laub and Langer's views on the role of the listener, marking Laub's emphatic listener as an "interventionist" (Tal 1996:57). I argue in this dissertation that both Vera and Dangarembga invite the reader to bear witness to the victims' testimonies in their fiction.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the researcher's general approach in carrying out the research (Leedy and Omrod 2012:10, Babbie and Mouton 2008: 74). Mouton (2001: 56) views research methodology as focusing on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. This entails a systematic process involving the methods to be used in collecting the data and the steps to be followed. Carter and Little 2007: 1370, 1320) concede

that methodologies justify methods, which produce data and analyses, and methods produce knowledge, so methodologies have epistemic content.

The research uses the qualitative methodology. Robert (2011:28-29) notes that the diversity of what is called qualitative research, because of its relevance to different fields and professions, challenges anyone to arrive at a succinct definition and so identifies five defining features of qualitative research as follows: studying the meaning of people's lives under real-world conditions; representing the views and perceptions of the people; covering the contextual conditions within which people live; contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behaviour and striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone (<https://teddykw2.files.wordpress.com/2012/05qualitative-research-from-start-to-finish.pdf>).

Qualitative research tends to be rich with quotations, descriptions and narrations as researchers attempt to capture conversations, perceptive, meanings and voices. This is research with words instead of numbers (Willis 2008:40). As such, a qualitative method is concerned with non-statistical methods and small samples, often purposively selected (Delpont and De Vos 2011:65). Qualitative research makes extensive use of descriptive data as it describes a phenomenon with words, not with numbers (http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/12269/Vosloo_JJ_Chapter_5.pdf?sequence=6)

The choice of this methodology is informed by the nature of my research which is probing how some social groups are marginalized and oppressed by different oppressive systems. The methodology is ideal in this type of research because it gives me access to the world of the different groups of people represented in the novels I analyze in this study—the marginalized, the oppressed, the silenced and the traumatized.

The qualitative method is also ideal for this type of study in which the ways of collecting data entails reading the novels of the authors I analyze and all the primary sources (books, articles or journals that have a direct bearing on the authors I am analyzing), all relevant literature in the area of my study (journals, articles, other publications that have a bearing on my topic and subject of study) and all the secondary sources which will broaden the scope of

knowledge of my topic and my field of study. This will also involve reading all key critics and theorists in my field of study and other texts which are relevant to my research topic.

The research will be conducted by means of literature study. The data shall be gathered by means of extensive and intensive reading of the sources I have mentioned above. In this way, I will collect textual evidence to build a base for my argument. I will compile the data by writing notes. After compilation of the data, I will analyze it and interpret it. This will be followed by comparison of the findings with my hypothesis in this research. This step will be followed by validation of my hypothesis or some corrections in the light of new data gathered. Lastly, based on my research findings, I will make a conclusion and give resolutions and recommendations.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS DIRECTING THE RESEARCH

The research is guided by the following key questions.

- (a) How do Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera represent marginalized voices and trauma in their fiction selected for analysis in this research and to what extent are they successful in doing so?
- (b) How do the two authors create spaces for discourses of marginalized voices and retrieval of socially silenced narratives and to what extent do they succeed in this objective?
- (c) What ways are used by the authors to negotiate oppressive conditions of women (and girls) and champion their emancipation and voice?

1.9 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The fact that both Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera write doubly as Africans and as black women necessitates the hypothesis that they write both as Africans and as feminists. The research posits that both the aforementioned authors commonly highlight from a gender perspective the oppression and marginalization of women and the recovery of their silenced discourses. I further postulate in this dissertation that the narratives of Vera and Dangarembga create spaces in which marginalized subjects boldly challenge the oppressive systems and change the world around them and that of many others in similar situations.

I further posit in this research that the selected novels of Dangarembga and Vera I analyze unfold under the backdrop of gendered colonialism, racial ideology and patriarchal system and the characters portrayed by the novelists and their actions are shaped by these contextual factors.

2. CHAPTER TWO: GENDER, CLASS, RACIAL AND COLONIAL OPPRESSION OF WOMEN (AND GIRLS): CHAMPIONING EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN AND VOICE IN DANGAREMBGA'S FICTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I focus on *Nervous Conditions* and its sequel, *The Book of Not*, by Tsitsi Dangarembga which probe the various factors which oppress and marginalize women (and girls) and silence their voices in the colonial and postcolonial contexts in which they are set. I posit that Dangarembga foregrounds feminist/womanist discourse which explores social issues which black African women struggle against in the social and historical contexts in

which she writes. According to Mangena (2015:33), there are three central objectives of feminist writing which are as follows: “: a liberating contestation of various forms of oppression, a response to exclusion and a struggle for identity”. She notes that “Zimbabwe black feminists perform such roles by rewriting historiography and contesting exclusion and misrepresentation of the black women’s experience in mostly male-authored works”. According to Modzwa-Taruvinga and Muponde(2005: xiii cited in Mangena 2015: 33), these narratives become “discourses that recover the repressed narratives of women”. I posit that Dangarembga, like Vera, foregrounds feminist/womanist discourse which articulates issues which affect women from a women perspective in her fiction. Murray (2011:155) argues that “creating texts that will mirror the experiences of the female subject from their own perspectives is an important feminist and post-colonial project.” Firstly, I shall explore the ways Dangarembga uses to examine factors which oppress women and silence their voices in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. I argue that oppression related to colonial experiences such as racial and class compounds the situation of social and racial historically oppressed and marginalized. Next, I will discuss colonial and racial oppression Dangarembga explores in *The Book of Not* and argue that these factors combined with gender oppression are the underlying reasons for the inequalities in the social and economic systems in the postcolonial context. Lastly, I will discuss the innovative ways women depicted in Dangarembga’s fiction explore to negotiate their oppression and champion their emancipation and voice. I show that Dangarembga constructs strong female characters such as Tambu, Lucia and Nyasha who stand up against their patriarchal oppression social injustices and that of other women and thus achieve social liberation and voice.

2.2 PATRIARCHAL AND COLONIAL SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN (AND GIRLS) IN DANGAREMBGA’S NERVOUS CONDITION

Nervous Conditions is set in colonial Rhodesia of the 1960s and 1970s and it probes the colonial and patriarchal domination of women (and girls). The novel critiques the norms, values and beliefs entrenched in the traditional society which oppress and subordinate women (and girls) and the oppressive colonial system which compounds the condition of women through its discriminatory and racial policies through the main story of its main narrative, the story of Tambudzai Sigauke, the heroine and narrator of the story. The book also highlights the other issues black women contend with under patriarchal and colonial

systems and structures because of their gendered status through the lives of the other female characters portrayed in the story—Mashingayi, Tambu’s mother who is an underprivileged and uneducated rural woman and Jeremiah’s wife; Lucia, an underprivileged and unmarried woman; Maiguru, Tambu’s well off and educated aunt who is from a working class like her husband, Babamukuru and Nyasha, Babamukuru and Maiguru’s Anglicized and headstrong daughter. According to Mangena (2015: 36), the novel is generally “a stark critique of both the patriarchal beliefs of the black community and against the racist structures under which the community must live.”

The book is set in the Tribal Trust Land outside the city of Umatali where Tambu lives with her poverty-stricken family when her narrative begins. The setting shifts to Old Umtali mission where Tambu moves to when she gets an opportunity for education after the tragic death of her brother, Nhamo. Tribal Trust Lands were areas which were created for black settlement during the Rhodesian colonial era through the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. Mangena (2015:22) notes that “One of the most damaging and visible colonial policies for blacks in Rhodesia was The Land Apportionment Act of 1930. Through this Act, many blacks lost their fertile lands to the new occupants and were dumped in reserves that could not sustain their living since they depended on land for survival” (<http://hdl.handle.net/1887/31875> (accessed on 11 July 2015)). Similarly, Henry Vuso Moyana notes that, “one of the most thorny issues in Rhodesian society is the question of the land distribution. The African, regardless of class or status, is alive to the pros and cons of the land issue. The farmer, the peasant, the businessman, the preacher, the teacher or the farm labourer feels humiliated, degraded and bullied by the brutalizing effects of the Land Apportionment Act which was passed in 1930” (https://journals.co.za/content/afre/5/1/AJ00020117_19?crawler=true).

The areas designated for black settlement were dry, dusty and the rainfall pattern was erratic. In 1969, under the Land Tenure Act, the proportion of land between whites and blacks was ‘equalized’ at 41.4 % of the land. The land allocated to a population of approximately 250,000 whites remained in the Highveld of fertile areas with comparatively regular rainfall; that allocated or re-allocated to approximately 6.5 million blacks was divided into 160 areas of much poorer land with little rainfall and over-populated by both people and cattle (Irene Staunton, Publishing Director, Baobab Books—the Postcolonial Web, www.postcolonial.web.org).

The unjust colonial land policies displaced Africans from their fertile ancestral land and crowded them in dry, dusty areas with erratic rainfall patterns thereby marginalizing and impoverishing them. According to Elvira Craig de Silva (2007:6), people experience marginalization when they find themselves on the fringe of social, economic and political consciousness. In *Nervous Conditions*, Tambu learns about the history of social displacements of black people and how it affected Africans from her grandmother; history that could not be found in the textbooks (p17). Her grandmother tells her that her family used to live in Chipinge where the soil is ripe and her grandfather was rich in the currency of those days, having many fat herds of cattle, large fields and four wives who worked hard to produce bountiful harvests. Her grandmother tells her: 'Wizards well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced the people from the land. On donkey, on foot, on horse, on ox-cart, the people looked for a place to live. But the wizards were avaricious and grasping; there was less and less land for the people. At last the people came upon the grey, sandy soil of the homestead, so stony and barren that the wizards would not use it' (NCpp18).

Nervous Conditions critiques the colonial and patriarchal oppression of women (and girls) and thus reveals the underlying reasons for the social and economic condition of blacks and the social and racial inequalities inherent in the social and economic systems in the social and historical settings of her fiction. Oppression is defined as "an unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of the society" (Collins 2001:4). Patriarchy, on the other hand, is a social system in which men occupy dominant positions as head of the families. According to Walby 1990:20), It is "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" and the "term social structure implies the rejection of both the biological determinism and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman is in a subordinate position. It is composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, the patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions...". Dangarembga examines all these forms of female patriarchal oppression and subordination which affect women (and girls) in the colonial and postcolonial settings.

Dangarembga posits that gender is the basis on which women (and girls) are oppressed and subordinated in the social and historical settings of her fiction. Gender is a social construction

which determines the relationship between males and females and assigns specific roles for each social group. Aquino (1993: 33—34 in Adriana Rodenheisa 2016:8) asserts that “gender is the social form adopted by the sexes whenever they are ascribed specific values, functions, and norms, or what are also rather clumsily called social roles ...The relationship between the sexes becomes hierarchical and unequal because women a priori have a subordinate role... An unequal system maintains stereotypes and demands ways of behaving prescribed by the culture, religion, and society for each sex according to gender identity.” Dangarembga reveals the underlying norms, beliefs and stereotypes that are used to uphold an unequal social system in which men occupy dominant positions and women are ascribed subordinate positions and assigned inferior roles in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Through the portrayal of her heroine and the other female characters, Dangarembga reveals that the oppression, marginalization and victimization of women (and girls) in the colonial and postcolonial contexts in which she writes is primarily caused by their gendered status. African literary theories acknowledge the gendered status of African women and they seek to empower all women to be conscious of their gendered status. Chioma Steady (1987) in Gatwiri and McLaren (2016: 266) echoes this point when she argues that African feminism is an ideology which empowers many African women to understand their gendered status in the society. Dangarembga argues that the advent of colonialism compounded the situation of women who already had social oppression to deal with because of their gendered status in a patriarchal society. Davis and Graves (1986: 8 in Gatwiri and McLaren (2016: 266) admit that certain inequalities and limitations existed/exist in traditional societies and argue that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others. Among the other forms of oppression introduced by colonialism which Davis and Graves refer to is racial oppression of blacks which Dangarembga deals with in the sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, *The Book of Not*.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga uses the struggle of education by an underprivileged country girl, Tambu, to highlight the plight of black African girls in a patriarchal and gendered colonial society. As her narrative begins, Tambu is barely ten years old. She is forced to drop out of primary school by her father, Jeremiah, because the little money available in the family is not enough to keep both her and her brother, Nhamo, in school. The latter is allowed to remain in school because he is a male child. Babamukuru sends enough money from England to pay for the fees of both Tambu and Nhamo but Tambu’s money is spent on beer by her

father because he views the education of girls as a waste of money (p45). When Tambu is forced to drop out school, she approaches her father about her situation with regards to going to school. Her father tells her to stop worrying about school and stay at home where she can learn the roles of a woman because she is a girl. He says: "Is that anything to worry about? Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables"(p15). His reasoning is based on the views and attitudes of the society with regard to the education of women and the roles assigned to them. He wants to groom Tambu to be a good house wife, the destiny patriarchy prescribes for women in the traditional patriarchal society.

Tambu's father also demands the ten pounds donated to Tambu by the white lady for her school fees when she goes to town to sell her mealies with Mr Matamba, her teacher. When Mr Matamba tells him that it is important for Tambu to go to school because one day she will earn more than ten pounds a month when she does well in her studies, he retorts: 'Have you ever heard of a woman who remains in her father's house?...She will meet a young man and I will have lost everything' (p30). Tambu's father also remarks that: 'Tambudzai's sharpness with her books is no use because in the end it will benefit strangers' (p56). The views and attitudes held by Tambu's father mirror the dominant ideas, beliefs and attitudes embedded in the traditional society which oppress and marginalize women and perpetuate their subjugation and subordination.

Dangarembga reveals that some women have also been socialized to accept the stereotyping of women in the society. Tambu approaches her mother, Ma'shingayi, for advice after her efforts to get help from her father are in vain. To her disappointment, even her mother shares the same views with her father. She tells Tambu that her father is right because even Maiguru, Babamukuru's educated wife, knows how to cook and clean and grow vegetables. Ma'shingayi also tells Tambu that the business of womanhood is a heavy burden and adds that things are not easy so she has to start learning them from a very early age. She warns Tambu: "And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other." (p16). Ma'shingayi's views show that she has been socialized to accept the stereotyping of women in the society. She is not even supportive when Tambu decides to grow maize in order to raise money for school fees. She tells her to accept her lot and enjoy what she can of it as there is nothing else to be done (p20). The attitude of

Ma'shingayi towards Tambu reveals how women's battle for social emancipation is often made complex by the fact that some women have been socialized to work in complicity with men in the oppression and subordination of other women.

Tambu learns early in her life that the rights of women in society are disregarded when she is victimized on the grounds of gender and is forced to adjourn her primary education. She remarks that: "The needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate. That was why I was in Standard Three in the year that Nhamo died, instead of in Standard Five, as I should have been by my age. In those days I felt the injustice of my situation every time I thought about it, which I could not help but do often since children are always thinking about their age. Thinking about it, feeling the injustice of it, this is how I came to dislike my brother, and not only my brother, my father, my mother—in fact everybody" (p12)

The gross injustice Tambu suffers when she is forced to drop out of school by her father because she is a girl and when Babamukuru chooses Nhamo over her to go and learn at the mission because he is a male child is the basis on which she makes her declaratory statement in the opening of her narrative that: "I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness, as you may define it, my lack of feeling" (p1). This declaratory statement foregrounds feminist/womanist discourse in this novel. It is only through the tragic death of her brother that Tambu finally gets an opportunity for education. However, Babamukuru decides to take her only because there is no male child to take the duty of emancipating Jeremiah's family (p56).

The patriarchal oppression of girls is a dominant theme in Zimbabwean literature and African literature in general. Murray (2011:141) observes that the patriarchal oppression of girls is explored by many Zimbabwean writers who include Tsitsi Himunyanga and the late Yvonne Vera and Chenjerai Hove. These writers demonstrate in their works that girls in the traditional African society were not allowed to go to school because the money available was spent on boys and in some cases girls were forced into arranged marriages so that the money paid for their lobola could pay school fees for their brothers.

Dangrembga reveals that all males—the young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated hold ideas of chauvinism, bigotry and elitism in the society and explores these by

examining the relationship between male and female characters portrayed in her fiction. Chauvinism is defined as an exaggerated belief in the superiority of any group to which one belongs (The Heinemann English Dictionary, 2001:160) and a male chauvinist is a man who believes that men are superior to women, and acts in a prejudiced way towards them (The Heinemann English Dictionary 2001:609). Bigotry, on the other hand, is being intolerant or prejudiced towards matters of race or religion (The Heinemann English Dictionary 2001:90) while elitism is the belief that some things are organized for the good of a few people who have special interests or abilities (The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary online 2017).

In this research, male chauvinism describes the disregard of women's rights and the way they are prejudiced against by men while bigotry refers to the way males are intolerant or being prejudiced towards females. Dangarembga argues that all women are victims of social prejudice through the way all women depicted in her fiction are treated by men. Tambu is prejudiced against when she is forced to adjourn her primary education by her father and when Babamukuru chooses Nhamo over her to go and learn at the mission. Jeremiah acts in prejudiced ways towards his wife whom he does not allow to have any freedom to make her own decisions or to have voice in all matters in her life. Tambu says that her mother does not own her mind since it had belonged first to her father then to her husband (p155).

Nhamo has an exaggerated opinion of male supremacy as shown in his constantly showing off of his exaggerated beliefs of male superiority to Tambu and his other his sisters. The conflict which characterizes the relationship between him and Tambu and his other sisters during their childhood days is largely caused by his chauvinism. He sends his sisters on errands just to demonstrate that he has authority over them. He also behaves in an obnoxious way towards Tambu and he sabotages her project by stealing maize and giving them to his friends at Sunday school. Tambu remarks: 'I have met so many men who consider themselves responsible adults and therefore ought to know better, who still subscribe to the fundamental principles of my brother's budding elitism, that to be fair to him I must conclude that he was sincere in his bigotry' (NCp 49— 50).

Despite being highly educated, Babamukuru is totally entrenched in his beliefs that women should occupy traditional social subordinate positions while men continue to hold dominant positions and he will not change. He has total disregard for women's rights. He is intolerant,

has an overbearing attitude and is prejudiced towards them. He imposes his wish and will on women including his wife, Maiguru, whom he does not allow to have a say in the running of the family. He denies her virtually all her rights including having her salary which he takes and uses to finance his family projects without her approval. She plays second fiddle to him in all matters in the family in spite of the fact that she is as highly educated as him and she also works just like him. He imposes his wishes and will on her just like he does on Ma'shingayi when he plans a wedding for her and her husband, Jeremiah which he suggests as a solution to exorcise their sins without consulting them or seeking their consent.

Babamuku also shows his discrimination against women (and girls) through his preference for educating male children. When he returns from England, he chooses Nhamo to go and learn at the mission where he is the headmaster and where there are good facilities because Nhamo, as a male child, should be well-provided for so that he can help emancipate his family from the abject poverty it is trapped in or as Tambu puts it: "lift our branch of the family out of the squalor in which we were living"(p4). When Tambu's youngest brother Dambudzo is born, he starts saving money for him so that when he is of school-going age everything will be provided for because he is the only male child in that family (p183).

Babamukuru's prejudice towards women (and girls) is also shown by his objection to the idea of Tambu going to Sacred Heart because he thinks that associating with whites will compromise her decency (p183). He only agrees after Maiguru challenges his prejudice against women and reminds him that in the fifties when they went to South Africa people were prejudiced against educated women (p184). The way women are prejudiced in the society is also revealed by fact that Babamukuru's relatives think Maiguru did not go to England for studies like her husband but to look after her husband and the kids.(p102) When Maiguru comes back from England, her male colleagues at the mission do not have the courage to ask her for assistance in their work because she is a woman.

The complete disregard of the rights of women by Babamukuru is also shown in how he handles family disputes. He convenes a meeting to decide the fate of Lucia whom he browbeats to leave his homestead when he discovers that she has been impregnated by Takesure. He only invites Takesure to the meeting but he does not invite Lucia which shows that in his view women do not matter and even their views are not worth listening to and so

a verdict can be passed without their presence. Babamukuru's treatment of his daughter, Nyasha, whose ways he always reproaches shows prejudice. He imposes rigorous standards of discipline, obedience and manners on her and condemns her to whoredom when she stays late at night after attending a Christmas party (p116). He keeps a hawk eye on his daughter and forces her to join him in his holiday family trips but he does not do the same on Chido, Nyasha's brother.

Babamukuru is firmly determined to ensure that the traditional social status quo is maintained and his power and the position he holds put him in an ideal position to achieve his objectives. Tambu remarks that: "He was a rigid, imposing perfectionist, steely enough in character to function in the puritanical way that he expected, or rather insisted, that the rest of the world should function". She adds that: "...Babamukuru had found himself—as eldest child and son, as an early educated African, as headmaster, as husband and father, as provider to many—in positions that enabled him to organize his immediate world and its contents as he wished".(p88) Babamukuru wants to uphold the patriarchal social system and maintains the traditional social status quo in which the relationship between men and women is hierarchical and unequal, a social system in which men and women are ascribed specific roles and men hold dominant positions and women a priori have a subordinate role as Aquino (1993: 33—34, cited in Adriana Rodenheisa 2016:8) asserts.

Dangarembga argues that the gendered status of women makes them vulnerable to domestic violence and other forms of abuse and further argues that women are blamed whenever things are not going the right way and also harshly criticized if their ways are deemed not to be in accordance with the norms of the society. Tete's eldest son beats his wife so badly that she ends up in hospital fighting for her life (NCp148). Lucia, who is unmarried and freely explores her sexual desires but does not have a child, is branded a witch by the society. Tambu says: 'Lucia was indicted for both her barrenness and witchery' (NCp128).

In her fiction, Dangarembga reveals that the struggle for emancipation by women in a colonial setting is complex because of the colonial historical background they have. She argues that their struggle is two-fold as they have to deal with the discriminatory colonial system which oppresses blacks in general on the grounds of their colour and then the patriarchal system which oppresses women because of their gender. Mangena(2015: 35) notes that "In *Nervous*

Conditions, the battle waged by black women in a colonial state is two-dimensional. Like black men, they suffer the colonial burden but, over and above that, they have to contend with domination in a patriarchy". Aidoo calls this condition of African women "the 'double yoke' on women, and she adds that 'ours has been a double quarrel. Not only as Africans, but also as women. Colonized by the colonizer, then by our own men, with their new power' (Iyer 1996p123 in Lunga 2003:4).

Dangarembga also examines the multiple factors which oppress and subordinate women (and girls) in a colonial setting. Mangena (2015:35) notes that, "In all her creative works, Dangarembga protests against various forms of oppression as they affect women." Through the story of Ma'shingayi, Dangarembga highlights the socio-economic problems black women contend with in the greater society in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. She and her family live in wretched, abject squalid conditions. The structures they live in are deplorable: the house is dilapidated and poorly ventilated, the sanitation is terribly bad (p125) and there is no access to clean water as they fetch water at the river. Due to these poor living conditions, Tambu's father is permanently asthmatic and bronchitic (p135). Ma'shingayi has experienced a high infancy mortality rate (she lost four babies in infancy, three of them boys (p51).

The story of Ma'shingayi reveals the complex factors which oppress black women and perpetuate their condition of subordination. Tambu remarks that her mother suffers from being female and poor and uneducated and black (NCp91). Dangarembga establishes that the causes of black poverty in general and black women in particular which Ma'shingayi tells Tambu (p15) are race, class and gender. According to Karik-Olubulaka (2016:18), "the African woman has a great deal against domination and subjugation because of the circumstances which surround her (Gender, Race, Class). Maria Stewart in Collins (1990:3) cited in Gatwiri and Hellen Jacqueline (2016) also echoes this point when she says race, gender and class are the fundamental causes of Black women's poverty. The social and economic conditions Ma'shingayi lives under mirrors the daily social and economic struggles black women grapple with daily in the social setting of Dangarembga's fiction and this is also a reflection of the lives of many black women in The Third World.

Dangarembga also critiques the colonial education system and reveals how it discriminated against blacks through its unjust racial policies and compounded the situation of the black

African girl already oppressed and marginalized by the social patriarchal system. When the nuns come to the mission to conduct entrance examination for enrollment at Sacred Heart, a prestigious colonial multiracial private convent school in the country, there are only two places for all the African Grade Seven girls in the country (NCp181). African feminism recognizes that certain inequalities and limitations existed/exist in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others (The Charter of Feminist Principles Feminists (2006: 5 cited in Gatwiri and McLaren (2016:265). The discriminatory colonial education widened and entrenched racial and social inequalities in the colonial and postcolonial context because whites had access to the best and quality education and so their prospects were greatly enhanced while the majority of the blacks who did not have access to the best education remained oppressed and marginalized. Through the story of Tambu, Dangarembga reveals the underlying social, colonial and racial factors which oppress and marginalize blacks in general but women in particular and continue to circumscribe them in these subordinated conditions.

Dangarembga examines the patriarchal and colonial subordination of women (and girls) in *Nervous Conditions*. She presents stories that examine the realities of many black African women in the colonial and postcolonial settings and reveal that gender is the basis on which women (and girls) are oppressed and marginalized in these social and historical contexts. She reveals that all women—the young and old, educated and uneducated, poor and rich, working or not working—are discriminated and prejudiced against in the social and historical contexts her fiction is set. *Nervous Conditions* explores the different struggles waged by women in the colonial and postcolonial contexts through the story of the protagonist and narrator, Tambu, and those of the other female characters depicted. The book also critiques the discriminatory colonial education system and reveals how its unjust racial policies further widened and entrenched social and racial inequalities.

2.3 COLONIAL AND RACIAL OPPRESSION IN THE BOOK OF NOT

The Book of Not, a sequel to Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, is the continuation of the story of the struggle for education by Tambudzai Sigauke, the protagonist and narrator of *Nervous Conditions* and is set during the Zimbabwe Second *Chimurenga* period up to the time of the attainment of political independence and the establishment of majority government in

1980. In this text, Dangarembga tackles colonial and racial ideologies which oppressed and marginalized blacks and deepened and widened racial and social inequalities in the social and historical settings in which she writes. The book especially focuses on the discriminatory colonial education system which oppressed and marginalized black students in general but girls in particular from the perspective of Tambudzai Sigauke (known as Tambu in the story) and six other black students –Ntombizethu (Ntombi), Irene, Anastasia, Benhilda, Patience and Cynthia (all members of the ‘African dormitory’)—at The Young Ladies’ College of the Sacred Heart, a racially segregated multiracial convent in colonial Rhodesia run by nuns. In this book, Dangarembga cogently argues that the inherent inequalities in the social and economic systems are a result of colonial legacy.

Racism is defined as the practice of discrimination and prejudice based on racial classification and supported by the power to enforce that prejudice (Barndt, 1991; Garcia and Van Soest, 2006 cited in Elvira Craig de Silva 2006:6). Racialism was a consequence of colonialism. Institutional or structural racism, on the other hand, is defined as the social, economic, educational, and political policies or forces that operate to foster discriminatory outcomes or give preferences to members of one group or others and it derives its genesis from the origin of race as a concept (Barker, 2003; Soto, 2004). *The Book of Not* probes institutional racism at school by exploring the experiences of black students at the Sacred Heart.

In this text, Dangarembga reveals that the colonial education system discriminated against the education of African students through its racial policies and practices which denied them equal access to education with white students. Education is a key factor for improving the lives of people in the colonial and postcolonial context. This is clearly seen in the case of Tambu’s uncle and aunt, Babamukuru and Maiguru, who have immensely benefited from the best and quality education they have accessed and are now among the elites of the society. Dangarembga reveals how the colonial education system discriminated against black students through its discriminatory enrollment policies and unfair practices. Tambu explains the recruitment process in the following lines: ‘Each year the nuns went out into the surrounding areas, away from the well-fenced suburb in which the school was situated. To these outlying areas the nuns delivered a beacon of hope by inviting two girls to attend an entrance examination to the convent. Two girls were chosen each year from amongst the hundreds tested. Once we arrived at the school, the two of us found out we were five percent. Or rather,

we did not exceed this figure as that was the quota set by the Rhodesian government on difference, and thus the nuns were obliged to respect it' (TBN p37).

The discriminatory colonial education system ensured that whites had access to the best and quality education service in the colonial setting while the blacks who formed the majority of the population remained oppressed and marginalized. Dangarembga argues that racial oppression entrenched social and racial inequalities and compounded the situation of women who have been socially and historically oppressed and marginalized. According to Grosfoguel et al (2004:6), "Class, gender and sexual oppression are aggravated due to the joint articulation of such oppressions with racial oppression". This is the basic argument Dangarembga makes in her fiction.

The Book of Not also explores racial prejudices suffered by black students at The Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart. When Tambu and the other black students arrive at the colonial convent institution, they discover that they are not treated equally with white students. White and black students have separate facilities. White students get preferential treatment. They are allocated better facilities and are not crowded in dormitories like black students. The white students also have separate boarding facilities while the six African girls are crowded in a four-room person in the African dormitory of St Ignatius corridor where they share the room facilities (p58). African students who are caught using facilities meant for white students get into trouble. Tambu gets into serious trouble when she is caught using a toilet for white students (TBNp 67). The black students are also threatened that the Rhodesian soldiers can come and insult them for using their daughters' bathrooms (73).

The St Ignatius dormitory is referred to as the African dormitory because the six black students live in it and it is the only one which has its own ablution section. The African students are disparaged and coded as ignorant because of their background. They are blamed for clogging the college sewage system by throwing their used feminine hygiene pads into it. (p63). Sister Emmanuel tells them that part of the reason they are sent to that school is to polish their behaviour.

Racial prejudice is rife at Sacred Heart. When the nannies serve white students food in the dining room, they do so well and politely, but when they serve the black students, they smack down jugs or plates with a jut of the chin and spills, as though slapping a hard, crushing thing

down on obnoxious crawling objects, or throw the plates to them (p46). At assembly, black students avoid physical contact with white students (p58). Miss Pato, the matron, is a stickler for order. She is unyieldingly insistent that everything should be kept where she grants it belongs. "Be it shoelaces above the tongues of shoes, clothes in cupboards or students in dormitories (p50). Her insistence that everything should be kept where she grants it belongs is symbolic of the segregation of the races at the institution and this mirrors the situation in the whole country.

The teachers show bias when they award prizes for academic excellence at the African boarding convent. The African students are not recognized for their performance and worthiness. Tambu and the other African students are told that not a single girl from their dormitory had ever achieved the honour roll (p65). Tambu, despite the fact that Bougainvillea hides her book when they are preparing for O' Level examinations (p147), gets the best O' Level results and she and Ntombi are on top of the nation (p152). In spite of their outstanding achievements, neither of them receives the academic trophy for the best O' Level results. This award is given to a white student, Tracey Stevenson. The explanation given for this decision is that the school undertakes to nurture well-rounded human beings. Tambu is also disappointed as she is eluded by the honour roll, a prize she has set her eyes on and worked so hard for hoping she would get it (p155).

Black students are forbidden at government schools. Tambu excels in her O' Level examinations at the convent and she proceeds to study science subjects for her A' Level certificate. Her school experiences a shortage of teachers and the science teacher who is expected to arrive from Europe does not come because of security concerns due to the war of liberation which is raging in the country. Because of this challenge, an arrangement is made for the science class to be driven to Umtali Boys High School each day for lessons but Tambu is not allowed at that school because she is black. Instead, Sister Emmanuel instructs her to identify one girl whose notes she can copy after lessons (p153). As a result, Tambu fails her A' Levels.

After failing her A' Levels, Tambu cannot be admitted at university. She does a few jobs secured with the help of Babamukuru's contacts in education and manages to enroll for studies at University of Zimbabwe when there are vacant spaces for mature students with Ds

and Es on their certificates. By the time she joins the job market, her former classmate, Tracey Steveson, has climbed up high in the agency hierarchy and she is now the advertising executive of Afro-Shine and also Deputy Creative Director in the New Zimbabwe (p216).

In the new Zimbabwe, Tambu realizes that blacks are still being segregated from whites in the Twiss hostel in which she now lives. The white girls do not want to sit with black girls. If Tambu, craving company, boldly carries her plate to the table, she is informed that another resident has booked even though no one will come (223). The matron of the hostel, Mrs May, fails to remember her name; she calls her Isabel (p207). Tambu could not be remembered but other white residents are remembered by the matron and as they troop past she greets them: "Morning Barbara! Hello, Fiona! Hello Jane!" (p208).

The story of Tambu mirrors the situation black people face in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. The anticlimax of the book as captured in the title of the novel, 'The Book of Not', clearly sums up the condition of the blacks in general and women in particular in a patriarchal and gendered colonial setting. Tambu's failure to be remembered by the matron is symbolic of the fact that blacks are hardly accommodated in the new dispensation as they are not recognized and remembered.

The Book of Not explores racial segregation in colonial Rhodesia. Although the book examines the racial oppression of blacks in general, it especially focuses on how women (and girls) were marginalized and discriminated against during colonial era. In this text, Dangarembga provides a cogent argument for the social and economic condition of blacks in general but women in particular. She critiques the discriminatory colonial education system from the perspective of Tambu, the protagonist and narrator, and the other six black African students at Sacred Heart and reveals how it oppressed and marginalized black students. Dangarembga argues that the colonial and racial oppression of blacks widen and entrench social and racial inequalities and, in consequence, perpetuate intergenerational poverty in social and racial groups historically oppressed and marginalized in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.

2.4 INNOVATIVE WAYS OF NEGOTIATING OPPRESSION AND CHAMPIONING WOMEN EMANCIPATION AND VOICE IN DANGAREMBGA'S FICTION

In this section of the research, I discuss the innovative ways women (and girls) use to negotiate oppressive situations and champion their emancipation and voice Tsitsi Dangarembga explores in her fiction. Dangarembga presents different categories of women who are in complex conditions in her writing and she explores the various innovative ways they use to negotiate their oppressive situations and champion their emancipation and voice. I posit that Dangarembga foregrounds and champions women emancipation and voice through the female narrative techniques she employs which empower women with narrative voice thereby allowing them to tell their stories from their own perspective. Furthermore, I argue that Dangarembga champions the social emancipation of women and the recovery of their silenced voices by constructing strong and fearless female characters who voice their different conditions of oppression and social silencing and that of other women by speaking out.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga presents different categories of women who are in different complex situations and who achieve varying degrees of success in their quest to achieve self-liberation and assertion. Some of the women achieve emancipation and voice while others remain trapped in their oppressive circumstances. Uwakweh, in *Debunking patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions* (1995), identifies three categories of women in *Nervous Conditions* as follows: the 'escaped' females—Tambu and Lucia, the 'entrapped' females—Mainini and Maiguru and the 'rebellious' females—Nyasha.

In the text, Tambudzai Sigauke, who is the narrator and heroine of the story, challenges her patriarchal oppression and marginalization by standing up to her father when he forces her to drop out of primary school and suggests that she should stay at home and learn to clean, cook and grow vegetables because the little money available in the family is not enough to keep both her and her brother, Nhamo, in school. Her father wants her to learn to clean, cook and grow vegetables because these are the roles that are prescribed for women by the patriarchal society. Furthermore, the patriarchal system prescribes marriage as the sole destiny for women. When Tambu stands up to her father, she totally rejects the traditional roles ascribed and place assigned to women and the destiny prescribed for them by the patriarchal social system. Writing in the Franchophone context, Renee Larrier(1998:133) argues that African Women writers reject the destiny prescribed for women by colonialism

and patriarchal tradition. Her argument is relevant in the Zimbabwean context in which Dangarembga writes because of the common colonial and patriarchal backgrounds the Franchophone societies and Zimbabwean society have.

By rejecting the ideas of her father, Tambu challenges and questions an oppressive social system which circumscribes women (and girls) in social subordinate positions. Tambu is determined to overcome her impossible odds and so she decides to raise money for her school fees by growing maize. By defying the ideas of her father, she rejects the patriarchal authority and the world it constructs for women, the world Babamukuru is firmly determined to maintain because of his position as the patriarch of the Sigauke family and the enormous power he wields because of his personal achievements. Tambu rightly observes when she remarks that: "Babamukuru had found himself—as eldest child and son, as an early educated African, as headmaster, as husband and father, as provider to many—in positions that enabled him to organize his immediate world and its contents as he wished." (p88). This is the world in which men remain in dominant positions while the women in subordinate status.

Babamukuru is completely entrenched in his belief of maintaining the traditional status quo. He reminds Tambu that being intelligent is not enough as she needs to grow into good woman. (p89) His statement echoes the idea that women are nurtured to be married. However, Dangarembga does not condemn marriage as it is in accordance with the social norms and expectations but what she criticizes is the idea of narrowing the social vision and destiny of women to marriage alone and their circumscription to traditional social roles. Tambu rejects this traditional image of a woman. Dangharembga constructs female protagonists like Tambu who challenge the social systems, structures and injustices that perpetuate the oppression and subordination of females and entrench the inequalities in the social and economic systems. The courage shown by Tambu infuses inspiration in many other girls in similar circumstances to rise above their social situations.

Tambu's journey from the rural homestead to the mission when she is taken by Babamukuru and Maiguru after the tragic death of her brother, Nhamo, is a voyage of discovery. At the mission, Tambu stays with Nyasha, her Anglicized cousin. Nyasha's dynamic personality, critical attitude and radical views she holds have a huge impact on Tambu's development of character and consciousness. She is the most rebellious character constructed by

Dangarembga in her fiction. Because of her upbringing in the British society which is more open than the Shona society the story is set, Nyasha freely expresses her opinion and openly challenges all forms of oppression and injustices women are subjected to in this society. She is most critical of her father, Babamukuru. She boldly questions his authority and constantly has fights and quarrels with him as she asserts her freedom. Nyasha criticizes her mother, Maiguru, for sacrificing herself and not making the best of herself.

Tambu has always been an antithesis of Nyasha. She contrasts her character with that of Nyasha below: "Besides Nyasha I was a paragon of feminine decorum, principally because I hardly ever talked unless spoken to, and then only to answer with the utmost respect whatever question had been asked. Above all, I did not question things. It did not matter to me why things should be done this way rather than that way". (p157). However, her unsophisticated nature and unquestioning attitude and obedience to Babamukuru gradually change when she stays with Nyasha. She remarks: "I had thought that issues would continue to be clearly delimited, with Babamukuru, who was nearly divine as any human being could hope to be, imposing the limits. Through him, because of him, black would remain definitely sombre and white permanently clear, even in spite of Nyasha, whose strange deposition hinted at shades and textures within the same colour. My vagueness and my reverence for my uncle, what he was, what he had achieved, what he represented and therefore what he wanted, had stunted the growth of my faculty of criticism, sapped the energy that in childhood I had used to define my own position"(p167).

The first real challenge of the authority of Babamuru by Tambu is when she takes a stand against his authority by refusing to attend the wedding of her parents which he organized without their consent. Babamukuru plans the wedding for Tambu's parents because he thinks it will exorcise their sins. Tambu refuses to attend this wedding because she says it makes a joke of her parents, her home and herself (p151). Babamukuru is incensed by Tambu's refusal to attend her parents' wedding. He says that anyone who defies his authority is an evil thing in his house and is bent on destroying what he has made (p169). What disappoints Babamukuru most is the fact that he had been holding Tambu up for nearly two years as an example of filial virtue for his wayward daughter, Nyasha, to follow (NCp171). As Tambu has turned fifteen, Babamukuru beats her fifteen lashes as punishment. He gives Anna two weeks

leave and asks Tambu to take over her duties as punishment for defying his authority (NCp171).

Tambu's consciousness gradually grows and she refuses to be brainwashed and to believe everything anymore. She remarks :“...Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed, bringing me to this time when I can set down this story. It was a long and painful process for me, that process of expansion. It was a process whose events stretched over many years and would fill another volume, but the story I have told here, is my own story, the story of four women I loved, and our men, this story is how it all began”. (p208)

Through the story of Maiguru, Dangarembga explores the frustrations and disappointments of educated and well off women under a patriarchal system. In spite of being as highly educated as her husband and working as he does, Maiguru does not have freedom. She is treated in prejudiced ways. For the greater part of the narrative, she is under the thumb of her husband, Babamukuru. She is portrayed as an ideal image of a traditional virtuous woman who is submissive, obedient and all-sacrificing. However, her tolerance and patience eventually come to an end when she stands up against the authority and overbearing attitude of her husband. The last straw is when Lucia comes to Maiguru's house to confront Babamukuru over his severe punishment of Tambu because she did not attend her parents' wedding but she tells her (Maiguru) that the things she discusses with Babamukuru are none of her business (NCp174).

Maiguru voices her opinions on several issues which she has been tolerant of. She tells Babamukuru that she is tired of being nothing in a home she is working herself sick to support (p174). She also tells him that she is not happy anymore in the house. When Babamukuru's self-control snaps and he tells Maiguru that she can go where she will be happy, she packs her suitcase and leaves (NCp175). She goes to her brother's home and spends some time there with him and his family, a move Nyasha hails calling it a “one-woman show”(p176).

The decision by Maiguru to leave her house for a while and stay with her brother yields some positive results. When she comes back home, she has some leverage in her family. She feels she does not have to be controlled and have things dictated to her. She is courageous to question the authority and decisions of her husband. One example is when Babamukuru says

Tambu cannot go to Sacred Heart because he thinks that associating with whites and having too much freedom will corrupt her and compromise her decency. Maiguru boldly challenges his views and expresses her disappointment at the fact that the views and attitudes of the society towards women have not changed since the 50s. She tells Babamukuru: "I don't think that Tambudzai will be corrupted by going to that school. Don't you remember, when we went to South Africa everybody was saying we, the women, were loose. ..It wasn't a question of associating with this race or that race at that time. People were prejudiced against educated women. Prejudiced. That's why they said we weren't decent. That was in the fifties. Now we are into the seventies. I am disappointed that people still believe the same things". (p184). In the end, Babamukuru listens to her and allows Tambu to go to Sacred Heart.

Lucia reacts to her condition of oppression and that of other women by speaking out. She takes a stand against patriarchy by challenging the authority of Babamukuru and questioning his decisions. She storms into the room in which a meeting convened by the patriarch to discuss the issue of her pregnancy which she has not been invited to as the accused is being held. She challenges the patriarch's decision to hold a meeting but excluding her as the accused. Lucia is bold enough to tell the patriarch that Maiguru asleep in her bedroom is the only person with a sensible head on her shoulders (pNC146) and adds that the whole patriarch makes her sick(NCp147). She refuses to be browbeaten by Babamukuru and she defies his orders that she and Takesure should leave his homestead after he found out that she is pregnant (NCp127).

Lucia's challenge of Babamukuru's authority is also shown when she criticizes him for severely punishing Tambu for not attending her parents' wedding. She asks Babamukuru whether he had asked what was on Tambu's mind and if he had also asked Tambu's mother whether she had wanted her daughter to be present at her wedding or whether he had asked if her mother wanted that wedding (p173). She tells Babamukuru that a woman whom he marries is obliged to obey him but women who are not married like her do not know how to do it. Lucia's boldness and courage to take a stand against the patriarchy makes Babamukuru applaud her and say she is like a man (NCp174).

Lucia uses her skills and wisdom to get what she wants. She successfully persuades Babamukuru to get her a job at the mission (NCp159). Unlike her sister, Ma'shingayi, who

remains trapped in her social circumstances of being female and poor and uneducated and black (NCp91), Lucia is able to improve her personal circumstances and achieve self-liberation and control over her life. Lucia also takes a stand against the oppression of her sister Ma'shingayi whose mind Tambu says has belonged to her father first and then her husband and therefore cannot speak about her oppressive condition. Lucia's exploration of her sexual freedom is symbolic of her assertion of her freedom.

Nyasha, Babamukuru's headstrong Anglicized daughter, boldly speaks out against all forms of oppression and injustices. She does not want to be addressed in the third person as she feels this makes her the object and she does not want to be anybody's underdog. Nyasha prefers reality to make-believe stories and she reads books about real people and their suffering because she says you should know the facts if you are ever going to find solutions (p94—95). Her reading of books about real people and their history shows her quest to understand the real factors that account for the oppression of people (and in particular women) and solutions to the problem. She freely challenges the social ideologies and all forms of injustices which women (and girls) are subjected to. Nyasha openly rebels against all forms of oppression and social injustices.

The fights and quarrels which characterize the relationship between Nyasha and her father, Babamukuru, are symbolic of the former's struggle to assert her freedom and voice in a patriarchal society. Her violent fights with her father and her breaking and tearing of things symbolize her rejection of the patriarchal values and ideas which oppress women. She violently confronts patriarchy. Her rampaging, shredding of her history book between her teeth calling their history lies, breaking mirrors, clay pots, and anything she can lay her hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh, stripping the bedclothes, tearing her clothes from the wardrobe and trampling them underfoot shouting, "They have trapped us! They have trapped us!" (p205) is symbolic of her rejection of the patriarchal world and its values and ideas which oppress women (and girls) and circumscribe them in subordinate status.

In the end, Nyasha suffers from anorexia. Anorexia is short for anorexia nervosa, a medical condition characterized by undereating or complete loss of appetite (The Heinemann English Dictionary p35). Her parents take her to a psychiatrist who tells them that it is uncharacteristic

for Africans to have anorexia (p206). Anorexia is a method which originated in the western societies and is used by western women to lose weight and attain slender bodies so as to conform to the western idea of beauty. Nyasha's anorexia, however, symbolizes the challenge against patriarchal domination. According Ukwakweh (1995:81), feminist scholars and critics including MacLeod and Chernin see anorexia basically as a woman's protest over lack of power. In a journal entitled *Transgressing Boundaries: Marginality, Complicity and Subversion in Nervous Conditions*. *English in Africa*; May 2003, Vol.30 Issue 1 Sheena Patchy argues that the female body, maligned and inscribed by patriarchal and colonial practice, becomes a powerful site of resistance in the novel.

Dangarembga shows that women (and girls) in different oppressive conditions use various innovative ways to champion their freedom and voice in *Nervous Conditions*. Through the story of the heroine of the novel, Tambudzai Sigauke, she argues that women challenge the world constructed around them and the destiny prescribed for them by patriarchy when she rejects the ideas and suggestions of her father that she should not worry about going back to school and stay at home and learn to cook, clean and grow vegetables. Dangarembga empowers her female characters with narrative power thereby allowing them to achieve social emancipation and voice. Tambu achieves emancipation and voice through narration. She is able to stand up against social injustices and so are the other female characters such as Lucia, Nyasha and later Maiguru. Dangarembga argues that women should rise above their circumstances and change the world constructed around them by the patriarchal system. She shows that women who do little to change their personal circumstances like Ma'shingayi remain trapped. Ma'shingayi is an antithesis of her young sister, Lucia and her daughter, Tambu. The story of Tambu infuses hope and inspiration in women (and girls) in similar oppressive situations and extends the vision of feminist/womanist writing of putting to an end all factors which oppress women and keep them in subordinate positions.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed Dangarembga's novels—*Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not*. Firstly, I showed that Dangarembga articulates gender, racial and class oppression of women (and girls) in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. I showed that Dangarembga uses the main story of *Nervous Conditions*, the story of Tambu, to set out her argument that gender

is the basis of women oppression and that all women regardless of their social, class, cultural or working backgrounds experience oppression and are prejudiced against in the colonial and postcolonial contexts in which she writes. Furthermore, I showed that Dangarembga argues that women should reject the world constructed around them by patriarchy as well as the destiny it prescribes for them as Tambu does. My discussion also revealed that Dangarembga explores historical and colonial factors which continue to perpetuate the subordination of women and I argued that colonial, racial and patriarchal oppression and domination of women (and girls) widen and entrench social and racial inequalities and, in consequence, perpetuate intergenerational poverty in groups historically and socially oppressed and marginalized. More importantly, I revealed that Dangarembga asserts that the struggle for total emancipation of women should not focus on gender alone but should be broadened to include other factors such as race and class. Lastly, I explored the innovative ways women portrayed in Dangarembga's fiction use to champion their emancipation and voice. I showed that women depicted in Dangarembga's fiction speak up against their oppressive situations and that of other women thereby asserting their freedom and voice and that of other women. Tambu gains social emancipation and retrieves her socially silenced voice through narrating her story and so do other female character such as Lucia, Nyasha and later Maiguru who achieve self-liberation and assertion by speaking up against the oppressive systems and structures. I argued that the story of Tambu infuses hope and inspiration to women (and girls) in different oppressive situations.

3. PATRIARCHY, GENDERED COLONIALISM AND OPPOSITIONAL NATIONALISM IN VERA'S FICTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I analyze the novels *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins* by the late Yvonne Vera which articulate violation of women and children during the violent colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe eras. I posit that Vera explores the theme of violation of women (and girls) in violent gendered colonial and postcolonial contexts against the background of a deeply patriarchal system to show that women (and children), the vulnerable and weak members of the society, bear the brunt of violence in these extremely violent environments because of their gendered status. I also reveal that Vera offers a critique of patriarchy, gendered colonialism and oppositional nationalism in her novels which impose silence on these narratives of violated female subjects. In the first section, I will focus on *Without a Name* and *The Stone Virgins* which explore narratives of violated subjects in a violent colonial setting during wartime and postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident period respectively. Then I will focus on *Under the Tongue* which articulates the incestuous rape of the girl child during the violent liberation struggle period. I argue that Vera explores the theme of sexual violation against women (and female children) during violent colonial and postcolonial dissident periods to reveal how women (and girls) are vulnerable to abuse during these cataclysmic periods; examine an entrenched culture of sexual violence against women (and girls) in violent gendered environments and show how these narratives of violated subjects are silenced by patriarchy, colonialism and masculine narratives of nationalism. More importantly, I argue that Vera offers discourse that contests the silencing of narratives of violated subjects in her novels I analyze.

3.2 NARRATIVE OF VIOLATED SUBJECTS AND SILENCED VOICES IN WITHOUT A NAME AND THE STONE VIRGINS BY YVONNE VERA

In *Without a Name*, Yvonne Vera probes the brutal sexual abuse of women in a violent colonial period against the background of a deeply patriarchal society. The novel is set in 1977 when The Zimbabwe Second *Chimurenga* was at its height and it explores colonial and war atrocious acts committed against women from the perspective of Mazvita, a woman from Mubaira in Mhondoro who is brutally raped by a Rhodesian soldier. In this novel, Vera also examines atrocities which were committed against whole communities during colonial wartime. She foregrounds feminist/womanist discourse in her fiction by exploring narratives of violated female subjects from a woman perspective.

The novel tells the tragic story of the brutal rape of the protagonist, Mazvita, by a guerrilla freedom fighter one misty morning while she is on her way to fetch water at the river. The brutal and dehumanizing rape leaves Mazvita bruised and bleeding and distressed and it remains engraved upon her memory. Her violent rape by a Rhodesian soldier who has a gun in his hand shows the violence which characterized the colonial wartime period and how vulnerable women were. Mazvita's brutal rape by the guerrilla freedom fighter also shows how rape is used by men to gain power over women in the patriarchal and gendered colonial society. Yvonne Vera explores the theme of the brutal and violent rape of women (and girls) in all her novels set in the colonial and postcolonial contexts to show that rape is a scourge of society which needs to be addressed.

Mazvita is violated in the worst way and she feels worthless. Mubaira evokes only unpleasant memories for her. She feels the place has no life and hope for her so she decides to flee and go to Harare where she hopes to get freedom and safety. As she flees, a village beyond the river is set ablaze by the soldiers (p31). The tragic story of Mazvita mirrors the social and political tragedies which many women suffered during the violent colonial wartime. The tragic stories show that in women pay the supreme price when there is an upsurge of violence in the society as they are raped and socially displaced like what happens to Mazvita. The tragic story of Mazvita mirrors the story of many women in a similar situation during this time when the whole country is engulfed in war. The rape of women in violent colonial environment which Vera explores in *Without a Name* shows an entrenched culture of the violent sexual of women which was part of colonial conquest. Connell (2014) notes that Brutality was built into colonial societies and the rape of women of colonized societies was part of the conquest (<http://globalsocialtheory.org/wp-accessed 2015>)

By exploring the tragic story of the brutal rape of Mazvita at the time when the country is involved in the liberation struggle, Vera offers a critique of masculine narratives which celebrate male heroism during the liberation struggle. She also champions the voice of these violated subjects which are often overshadowed by male discourse of nationalism by highlighting war atrocities committed against women through the tragic story of Mazvita.

Vera highlights the social and political predicament of women in the patriarchal and violent colonial and wartime period. According to Suganthi and Clarama (2016:232), "Vera's writings work against the silencing imposed on women by patriarchy and colonialism, and all her novels stress that to write is to banish silence." Grace Musila(2007:54) concurs with Suganthi and Claramma when she argues that " by telling the tragic stories of Mazvita's rape and the burning down of the village, Vera retrieve these banished narratives of ordinary people's less-glorifying experience of these heroic struggles and calls for the acknowledgement of the individual scars inflicted on individual lives; scars which have hitherto remained submerged in the mainstream framing of national liberation struggles as glorious acts of brave heroism by sons of the soil".

In her fiction, Vera critiques colonialism, patriarchal structures and oppositional nationalism. According to Meg Samuel (2003b:15 in Carolyn Martin Shaw 2004), "Yvonne Vera's writing offers a critique of colonialism, oppositional nationalism and patriarchal structures, and their customary ideas of land ownership and control over the female body and its futility". Vera engages in Zimbabwean history in her fiction which spans the entire period of the country's pre-colonial, colonial and post—independence—from the last years of the nineteenth century, when the British established Rhodesia as their colony (Lunga 2003:5), 'to the present political crisis' (Ranger 2005:1). Vera's portrayal of all her female protagonists in tragic situations reveals that the female body is an embodiment of scars and pain.

Tragic women stories like that of Mazvita and that of the other heroines Vera explores in her other novels are biographies that offer a criticism of colonialism, patriarchal structures and oppositional nationalism. In her own words, Vera says: "I'm writing, in a way, the biographies of unknown women, but I'm also interested in our national history; so they {biographies} are against the backdrop of a particular time" (Bryce 2002:223 in Lunga 2003: 4). The tragic women stories Vera tells in her fiction are not just fictional stories are but are indeed

reflective of the violence which in reality women experience on a daily basis in gendered society.

Vera's fiction creates space that contest the silencing of narratives of the gross violation of the vulnerable and weak members of the society by the hegemonic systems and ideologies. In her own words in the preface to *Opening Women's Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary Women's Writing*, Yvonne Vera asserts that "If speaking is still difficult to negotiate, then writing has created a free space for most women—much freer than speech" (Vera 1993:3). Through the tragic story of Mazvita, Vera retrieves these narratives of violated women silenced by the patriarchal and colonial ideologies and masculine nationalist discourses.

When Mazvita arrives in Harare, she moves in with Joel. Within a few days after moving in with Joel, she discovers that she is pregnant with the child of the guerrilla fighter who raped her. This discovery poses a threat to her relationship with Joel and jeopardizes her newly found freedom. She therefore decides to hide her pregnancy from Joe. However, she cannot hide her secret forever and one day Joe discovers it and he throws her out of the house. The freedom she seeks in the city eludes her and in desperation she commits infanticide.

In *The Stone Virgins* set in the postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident era (1980—1985), Vera explores the gross atrocities committed on ordinary women and civilians in general. The novel highlights these atrocities through the tragic story of the Gumedde sisters, Thenjiwe and Nonceba, who are beheaded, sexually violated and mutilated respectively by the dissident rapist Sibaso. Like in *Without a Name* where a whole village is burnt, *The Stone Virgins* also articulates the gruesome acts whole communities suffered during the dissident era through the burning of Thantabantu store (pages 133—134).

The atrocious acts explored in *The Stone Virgins* take place in Ngezi, a small township outside Bulawayo. This where Thenjiwe and Nonceba are beheaded, violated and mutilated respectively by the dissident Sibaso and where Thantabanthu store is burnt down and the storekeeper cold-bloodedly killed. Some civilians in the area are also cold-bloodedly killed while those who survive bear both mental and physical scars. The grisly and ghastly acts which take place in Ngezi mirror the atrocities widespread in areas affected by the dissident movement in Matabeleland, the part of the country affected by these political instabilities in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

When Sibaso sexually violates Nonceba, he mutilates her lips. This shows how the perpetrators of crime against women (and girls) expect their victims to remain silent forever. This mutilation is symbolic of the silence imposed on the narratives of violated subjects by patriarchy, colonialism and masculine narratives of nationalism in the social and historical settings of Vera's fiction.

The novels *Without a Name* and *The Stone Virgins* articulate the brutal sexual violation of women during the violent colonial and postcolonial contexts. In these novels, Vera explores the theme of sexual crime against women and show that women bore the brunt of violence in a patriarchal and violent gendered colonial period because of their gendered status. Vera argues that the narratives of sexual violation against women are silenced by patriarchy, colonialism and masculine narratives of nationalism. She offers discourses which challenge the silencing of these narratives by the patriarchal and colonial ideologies and discourses of nationalism through the tragic stories of her heroine which the novels tell.

3.3 NARRATIVE OF VIOLATED GIRL CHILD AND CHAMPIONING THE SILENCED VOICE IN UNDER THE TONGUE

In *Under the Tongue*, Vera tackles the thorny issue of incest in a deeply patriarchal society. The novel is set in 1979 at the height of The Zimbabwe liberation struggle and it tells the tragic story of a female child heroine, Zhizha, who is violently raped by her father, Muroyiwa, a self-styled war hero who himself has a troubled past. Zhizha is brutally raped at a time when the war of political liberation is raging on while her mother, Runyararo, is away. Runyararo comes home to avenge her daughter's sexual violation by killing her husband.

Vera's exploration of the theme of sexual violation against women (and girls) in her fiction reveals an entrenched culture of the exploitation of women (and girls) by men because of their gendered status. In this text, she argues that female children are often at the mercy of males in a violent gendered environment and reveals that the situation is aggravated by the absence of solid social and family structures. When Zhizha is sexually abused by her father, her mother is not there. She comes home to avenge the brutal abuse of her daughter by her father. The tragic story of Zhizha mirrors the gross sexual abuse of minors in a patriarchal and violent gendered colonial era. It highlights how minors who are weak and defenseless are exploited and how these narratives of violated subjects are silenced by hegemonic systems

and ideologies. Nana Wilson-Tagoe (2003:174) cited by Carolyn Martin Shaw (2004: 36) argues that the incest in *Under the Tongue* is an “exploitation of women’s powerlessness within a world constructed around their silence; on another level it is a negative symptom of a construction of masculinity embedded in the community and particularly heightened by war”.

The issue of familial sexual violation of children is shrouded in secrecy and stigma in the society because it is a topic considered taboo. Because of this fact, these narratives of familial sexual violation are not freely talked about. Victims are reluctant to report the perpetrators as they are close family members. Vera argues that these factors silence these narratives of sexual violation of minors in the social and historical settings of her fiction.

The brutal incest leaves Zhizha distraught, distressed and dehumanized. As a result, she loses her speech and memory, a situation which makes it complex for her to remember her story and articulate it. Vera passionately explores the issues of voice and silence in her fiction because they are at the heart of postcolonial writing within which her fiction is situated. According to Lunga (2003:12), “The issues of voice, speaking and violence are at the heart of postcolonial studies.

Under the Tongue explores the physical and emotional scars sustained by minors who are subjected to violent and brutal sexual abuse through the story of the child heroine Zhizha. After being brutally raped by her father, Zhizha sustains both physical and psychological scars. She feels violated in the worst way because she has been raped by her father. Therefore, she has a lot emotional issues to work out. She is confused. She carries physical and mental wounds, wounds which her mother says she is too young to know. Her mother tells her that it is a bad thing to carry scars. She adds that there are no words for certain kinds of scars, only sorrow and forgetting (p180). Zhizha’s body has pain too much to bear and her mind is in a confused state because of the brutal and dehumanizing act.

The perpetrators of the crime of sexual violence expect their victims to remain silent about the crime. This idea of silence imposed on the narratives of sexual violation of women (and girls) is captured in the language and names used in the novel. The title of the novel ‘Under the Tongue’ and the name of Zhizha’s mother, ‘Runyaro’ emphasize the fact that patriarchy expects these narratives of abuse to be silenced. Lunga (2003:12) notes that the title of the

novel 'Under the Tongue' encapsulates the notion of the 'unsayable' and that the name Runyararo (Silence) is brought into the story to reinforce the idea that men expect women (and girls) to remain silent all the time.

Vera highlights the importance of a support system which victims of sexual violence need for their recovery. In *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha gets this support from Grandmother and later her mother, Runyararo, when she comes back. The intervention of Grandmother helps Zhizha to recover her memory. Grandmother is the tower of strength in Zhizha's life. She shares with Zhizha her sad, painful and sorrowful story of the death of her son, Tonderai, a long time ago. This awakens Zhizha's memory.

Grandmother tells Zhizha the many sorrows, the many wounds women bear (p122). In her laments, she sings about the sorrows of the world, the grief of yesterday which follows her. She sings about finding a memory in her dreams, a memory that will be for healing not sorrow. She says we choose words, not silence. We choose words to bury our grief (p131). Zhizha says she knows Grandmother will heal her with her word, her word that is for remembering all that has visited her suffering. She reminds Zhizha: "We are women. We belong together in ancient caress the earth"(p132).

Grandmother reminds Zhizha about the painful history that women have and tells her that the pain and sorrow of the past must be articulated to initiate the process of healing. She tells her that under the tongue are hidden voices. Under the tongue is a healing place (p163). Grandmother adds that: "We have tongues. We are no trees. Our tongues carry all the memory of our pain. Our journey is watered with tears but we are not trees"(p173). Zhizha says Grandmother pulls a word from her mouth and places it under my tongue"(p174). When sorrow has visited, a woman will return to a place she thought had become memory. A word does not rot. It is not a fruit that rots on the ground. A word does not rot unless it is buried in the mouth for too long. A word buried in the ground only grows roots (p175). Grandmother does not only tell Zhizha her experiences but she also listens to her story. This shows that articulating narratives of violated subjects is not just about telling what happened but that it is also about listening to the story of the victim.

Zhizha's recovery of her speech is helped by the arrival of her mother. She urges her to repeat the letters of the alphabet after her (p201—203). Zhizha remembers all the letters of the

alphabet and she also reconnects with her mother. She says: “I remember all my letters. I tell my mother and she repeats after me and I laugh then I repeat after mother who repeats after me and I after her... I have turned into mother, and she laughs because she has become me. The letters flow from me to mother.”

Vera reasserts the importance of speaking as a way of banishing silence imposed on females by patriarchy, colonialism and masculine narratives of nationalism. Runyaro tells Zhizha that we live with our voices rich with remembrance and adds that we live with words (p203).

Under the Tongue explores the theme of incest. Vera sets her novel during the time when the country is engulfed in a war of political liberation to highlight the crime against women (and girls) committed during wartime and to champion the narratives of violated subjects which are often overshadowed by masculine narratives of nationalism and silenced by patriarchy. Vera shows that the subject of incest is often shrouded in mystery and secrecy because it is considered a taboo issue in the society and that perpetrators of this crime are usually close family members which make it difficult for the victims to report them. *Without a Name* contests against the silencing of these narratives by narrating the tragic story of Zhizha which mirrors the sexual violence against minors widespread in the country during its social and historical setting.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed Vera’s novels—*Without a Name*, *The Stone Virgins* and *Under the Tongue* which articulate narratives of violated subjects in the violent colonial and postcolonial era against a background of a deeply patriarchal society. Firstly, I focused on *Without a Name* and *The Stone Virgins* which critique patriarchy, colonialism and masculine narratives of nationalism in the colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwean contexts. I argued that Vera highlights the violent and brutal rape of women during the violent colonial wartime and postcolonial eras against the background of a patriarchal society to show that women (and girls) bear the brunt of violence in violent environments because of their gendered status and to reveal a culture of violence against women (and girls) which is entrenched in the society. I showed that by highlighting the gross sexual abuse of women (and girls) through the tragic stories of her female protagonists, Vera offers discourse that banishes the silence imposed on these narratives by hegemonic systems and ideologies in the social and political settings

of her fiction. My discussion of *Under the Tongue* shows that the tragic story of the incestuous rape of Zhizha highlights the gross sexual abuse of minors in colonial era during wartime. The discussion revealed that narratives of child incest are silenced because the subject is not freely talked about as it is considered taboo in the society and because the perpetrators of this crime are usually close family members and so victims often do not report.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I focus on *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins* by Yvonne Vera and *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and will show that these narratives work out colonial, racial and postcolonial trauma. Firstly, I shall discuss colonial and war trauma explored in *Without a Name* by Vera. I will show that Vera articulates trauma caused to individual victims and the nation as a whole during the violent colonial and wartime period in this book and argue that by articulating narratives of violated subjects and trauma, her novel works out war trauma suffered by individuals and the nation. Next I will analyze *Under the Tongue* which articulates girl child trauma. I will discuss the challenges of representing trauma and explore the various ways Vera articulates the subject in her fiction. Then I will analyze *The Stone Virgins* and will argue that it is a narrative of postcolonial trauma. I will analyze the ways Vera explores postcolonial traumatic experiences in this book. Lastly, I will look at *The Book of Not* which works out colonial and racial trauma and discuss the ways Dangarembga explores individual and national traumatic experiences in this book.

4.2 COLONIAL AND WAR TRAUMA IN VERA'S WITHOUT A NAME

Without a Name is a narrative of colonial and war violated and traumatized subjects. It works out trauma caused to individual victims and the whole nation by violent colonialism and war atrocities. The book is set in colonial Zimbabwe in 1977, the period when the Zimbabwe Second Chimurenga is at its height. In this text, Vera probes the brutal rape of women during this cataclysmic period from the perspective of Mazvita, a peasant woman from Mubaira in Mhondoro who is brutally raped by a Rhodesian soldier one misty morning while on her way to fetch water at the river. Vera explores the subject of the violent rape of Mazvita during a violent colonial wartime against a patriarchal background to show how vulnerable to gross sexual violation women were during this cataclysmic period because of their gendered status.

Through the tragic story of the protagonist Mazvita, Vera articulates the massive trauma wartime victims suffered. She argues that in the patriarchal and violent colonial wartime era in which her novel is set, women are exploited and they bore the brunt of the violence because of their gendered status. In an article entitled *Tremblings in the Distinction between Fiction and Testimony*, Jessica Murray argues that "Vera repeatedly returns to the impact of colonialism as the original harbinger of trauma"(Murray 2008: 15). This point made by

Murray is validated by the fact that all of Vera's novels I analyze in this research are set against the background of a violent colonial environment and articulate narratives of violated subjects and traumatic experiences.

Vera, like Dangarembga, argues that gender is the basis on which women are oppressed and exploited in the colonial and postcolonial settings and this is so because males who should offer protection to them take advantage of the fact that they are weak and defenseless. The portrayal of all her female protagonists in tragic circumstances in all of her novels I analyze in this dissertation validates this point. By setting her novel in violent colonial and wartime period against a patriarchal society, Vera offers a critique of patriarchy, gendered colonialism and narratives of masculine nationalism and highlights the importance of the recovery of narratives of traumatic experiences of social groups which are often marginalized and silenced by hegemonic discourses in the social and historical settings of her fiction.

Without a Name explores both the physical and psychological experiences of victims of colonial and war trauma. Mazvita is violated in the worst way is when she is violently and brutally raped by a guerrilla fighter holding a gun (p30). She is distraught, distressed and dehumanized. She suffers both great physical and deep psychological pain. Her body becomes an embodiment of emptiness, pain and silence and she feels a deep sense of loss and insecurity (p35—37). It is like the whole world is collapsing around her.

Mazvita is a traumatized subject. Her violent and brutal rape by a soldier holding a gun who whispers something into her ears, the war which is raging in the country and the atrocities committed as a whole village is burnt down as she flees Mubaira heading to Harare where she hopes to get freedom and security all evoke great fear in her. The narrator says: "Mazvita carried a strong desire to free herself from the burden of fear, from the skies licked with blue and burning with flame. She had not told Nyenyedzi everything. She had not told him about what that man who pulled her down had whispered to her, how she ran through the mist with torn clothes, with his whispering carried in her ears, how the sky behind her exploded as the village beyond the river burned..." (p31).

On her way to Harare, Mazvita sojourns at a farm where she stays with Nyenyedzi and experiences brief moments of happiness. During her short stay with Nyenyedzi, she is constantly haunted by unpleasant memories of Mubaira. She constantly fears for her life so

she resumes her journey to Harare. On arrival in Harare, she moves in with Joel but she does not stay long before she discovers that she is pregnant with the rapist's child. The pregnancy changes the complexion of her relationship with Joel. It is a threat to her freedom so she decides to hide it from Joel but soon he discovers it and chases her out of his house. In desperation, Mazvita commits infanticide.

The narration of trauma presents challenges. It cannot be presented through conventional narrative strategies. The traumatic events cannot be narrated in a logical way because the mind of the victim is still in a tumult. In *Without a Name*, Mazvita's tragic story is narrated in the third person narrative technique but the narrative strategy is not linear, clear and does not follow a simple or logical pattern. The traumatic events are presented in a dream-like manner and the flashback technique is used. For example, the events described in the first page of the novel happen in the end of the story, not in the beginning. This mirrors the disorientation and confusion which characterize Mazvita's thought patterns at this stage as she cannot think straight and logically because of the turbulent past. Lunga (2003:11) notes that "As Mazvita sleeps, as she walks around, her troubled mind is in a swirl, reliving the turbulent past. Memories, unpleasant ones, flood her mind, and do not come chronologically". The continual flooding of her mind with the memories of her traumatic event shows how trauma affects victims forever.

Trauma theorists argue that trauma victims need to give the traumatic experience a place in their life histories in order for them to recover. Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart (in Caruth 1995:176) argue that for traumatized subjects "complete recovery" can only take place when "the story can be told, the person can look back at what happened; he has given it place in his life history, his autobiography, and thereby in the whole of his personality". Mazvita longs to see the face of the man who raped her so that she can attach the emotion on it and give the experience a place in her life and memory. She wishes for an emotion as perfectly shaped as hate, harmful as sorrow, but she has not seen the man's face. She cannot find his face and bring it close enough to attach this emotion to it...She then transfers the hate to the moment itself, to the morning, to the land, to the dew-covered grass that she has felt graze tenderly against her naked elbow in that horrible moment of his approach" (p36).

Mazvita sees the land as acting in complicity with the rapist in her rape. The narrator says Mazvita seeks the emptiness of her body and realizes that she cannot connect the emptiness to the man. She connects him only to the land. It is the land that has come toward her. He has grown from the land. She sees him grow from the land, from the mist, from the river. The land has allowed the man to grow from itself into her body”(p37). The image of her violation by the soldier has a huge impact on Mazvita. She is affected in all dimensions of her life—physical and psychological and for her, the center cannot hold and things are falling apart, to borrow Chinua Achebe’s title of his masterpiece novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

Trauma victims go through processes of working out and working through after a traumatic experience. According to LaCapra (2001:6), the process of working out is shown when the traumatized person experiences dreams, nightmares, flashbacks, illusions or hallucinations of the traumatic event. The process of acting out is also identified when the victim tries to re-experience the traumatic event. Mazvita goes through a process of acting out when she experiences dreams, flashbacks and nightmares of the horrible experience of the rape as she journeys from Mubaira to Harare. However, critics argue that when the traumatized person is acting out after a traumatic experience, he or she has not yet reached the stage of coming to terms with the experience and the emotions involved in the trauma. Unpleasant memories of Mubaira and all that it represents for her after her brutal rape continual haunt Mazvita. This shows how the deep psychological effects of gross sexual violation continue to manifest in the victim long after the experience.

The narrator aptly captures Mazvita’s distressing state when she contrasts her situation with that of the children whose hearts burst with joy in the following lines: “They exploded. They ran around the shelter, screeched and scattered. They laughed, because one of them had fallen down. The shed was full of their delight. They rescued each other... (p6—7). Mazvita is mute and wounded and she moves through the streets and weeps. Her weeping falls in silent drops into her cupped palms. The streets grow rich with showers, with her tears (p15). Commenting on her style of writing and characterization, Yvonne Vera says, “I always need to be anchored in such a way that I am inside a character, seeing this fragmented or fractured world, and how— usually a woman—is trying to bring pieces together in her mind, to choreograph her life”(Bryce2003:219).

Without a Name is a narrative of colonial and war trauma. It explores the severe traumatic experiences suffered by individual innocent people and the whole nation as a result of colonial and war atrocities through the tragic story of the violent and brutal rape of Mazvita and the burning down of the whole village. Vera's fiction opens space for narratives of colonial and wartime atrocities to be articulated and for the trauma suffered by innocent individuals and the whole nation during this violent period to be worked out. The narrative strategies of flash-backs and the presentation of the events in a dream-like way used in the novel suits the subjects of trauma being articulated which cannot be presented in a conventional way. Vera shows that victims of trauma need to give traumatic experiences a place in their life histories in order for them to recover and that they go through a process of acting out when they experience dreams, flashbacks and nightmares of the traumatic episodes they have gone through.

4.3 FEMALE CHILD TRAUMA IN VERA'S UNDER THE TONGUE

Under the Tongue is a narrative of female child trauma. Set at the height of The Zimbabwe liberation struggle, the novel highlights the gross sexual violation of the female child through the tragic story of the incestuous rape of Zhizha by her father, Muroyiwa, a self-styled war hero. The crime is committed while her mother, Runyararo, is away. By telling the tragic story of Zhizha, the novel champions the voice of violated female children which are often silenced by dominant discourses in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Vera articulates the subject of incest at the time the war of political liberation is raging on in the country in order to highlight the importance of these narratives of gross sexual violation and traumatized children and to champion their voice which are silenced by the patriarchal system and structures. Commenting on the time setting of the novel, Suganthi and Clarama (2016: 233) say, "Vera looks at the idea of the rape of the girl child in a situation in which the entire country is engulfed in a war of liberation as rather ironic, but also as something that should place the struggle of traumatized and silenced voices on an equal footing with the national liberation struggles".

In *Under the Tongue*, like in all her other novels I discuss in this research, Vera offers a discourse which contests the silencing of the voices of the violated and traumatized subjects by patriarchal, colonial and masculine narratives of nationalism. Writing from a Latin

American context, Nancy Saporta Sternbach (1991 in Murray 2009:3) identifies parallels between the feminist theory's reconstruction and retrieval of women's histories and the testimonial genre's articulation of the histories of other oppressed groups in the following lines:

Even the characteristic traits of the two sound familiar: both include theory based on and grounded in the reality of a people who are breaking silences; both include theory for those who envision a future distinct from their past of oppression; both use discourse which gives voice to many others in the same situation; and influence and are influenced by people who, with their new consciousness as a political subject, make evident the relationship between the personal and the political in an historic moment when the subject sees herself/themselves as an integral part of the collective process. (cited in Murray 2009:2—3)

The ideas expressed by Nancy Saporta Sternbach are pertinent in the analysis of the fiction of Vera which offers discourses which contest the silencing of the voices of violated and traumatized subjects. Vera, like Dangarembga, foregrounds discourses which break silences imposed on traumatized subjects by oppressive systems in the colonial and postcolonial contexts and thus give voice to many other people in socially oppressed groups.

Under the Tongue articulates the gross violation of the children's rights and explores both the severe physical and deep psychological pain suffered by the victims. The violent and brutal incestuous rape of Zhizha by her father has devastating effects on her. Her world falls apart. She is violated and betrayed in the worst way because she is raped by her father who is supposed to offer her protection and love. This gross violation leads to her loss of both speech and memory. She is distraught, distressed, dehumanized and confused. Her body sustains wounds; she is in great pain; her mind is in great anguish and she is disoriented.

The novel *Under the Tongue* reveals a culture of gross violation of the girl child in the social and historical setting of Vera's fiction. The tragic story of the child heroine Zhizha reveals how children are vulnerable to gross sexual abuse in violent and gendered environments and establishes that the situation is compounded by the breakdown of the social and family structures. Zhizha's mother, Runyararo, is away when her daughter is raped by her father. She only comes home to avenge her daughter's violation.

The text articulates the pain that the girl child embodies in the patriarchal and gendered colonial settings. Suganthi and Claramma (2016:233) assert that “the novel *Under the Tongue* itself is an instance of the unveiling of embodied atrocities that girl childhood inscribes” and further note that “The agony and disorientation suffered by girl child Zhizha, during and after the brutal rape by her father is the basis of Yvonne Vera’s cumulative tale of unrelieved pain and unspeakable silences”.

Vera explores the cultural aspects which suppress the narratives of child incest in the social and political setting of her fiction. She establishes that the subject of incest is viewed as a taboo subject in the society and is thus shrouded in mystery and secrecy. It cannot be discussed freely and comfortably. This aspect is emphasized in the novel through the names of the characters and the title. The title ‘Under the Tongue’ suggests that it is a subject that should not be spoken about. The name Runyaro (silence) emphasizes this point of a subject which must be kept silent. According to Langa (2003: 12), the title of the novel ‘under the tongue’ encapsulates the notion of the ‘unsayable’ while the name Runyaro (Silence) is brought into the story to reinforce the idea that men expect women (including girls) to remain silent all the time.

The violent and brutal incestuous rape of Zhizha by her father leads to the loss of her speech and memory. This complicates her situation as she should remember her traumatic experiences and articulates them in order to recover and heal. Vera asserts the importance of this factor of remembering the traumatic events by trauma victims through the names of some characters in the novel. The name Tonderayi (remember) stresses the importance of remembering the traumatic experience in order to articulate it while the name Muroyiwa (the bewitched one) questions the sanity of a father who rapes his own daughter. For Zhizha, the recovery of memory and speech is crucial for her to articulate her traumatic experience.

Trauma victims require a support system for them to recover and heal. For Zhizha, this support system is provided by the intervention of Grandmother and her mother later. Grandmother is a tower of strength for Zhizha and she is instrumental in her recovery of memory. She stresses the importance of speech and says we choose words, not silence (p131). Grandmother opens up to Zhizha by sharing her painful past of loss and sorrow, the painful memory of losing her son, Tonderayi. By opening up to Zhizha, Grandmother

reawakens her memory and guides her through a healing process. Zhizha recovers her voice with the help of her mother when she returns.

Vera shows that trauma presents challenges in its presentation in her fiction. Its articulation is complicated by the fact that it is not registered instantly by the mind when it occurs. The human mind cannot register the trauma at the time of its occurrence because its impact knocks off the recording mechanism of the mind. Laub (1992a:57 cited in Murray 2009:3) observes that “massive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction” while Simon Critchley (1999:194 in Murray 2008: 13) argues that, “under the deafening shock or violence of trauma, the subject becomes an internally divided or split self” and this results in a “scarred interiority inaccessible to consciousness and reflection”. This implies that though the trauma has happened, the human mind has not yet processed it as an event which has happened since it has not yet registered it.

Narration of trauma presents challenges as it cannot be articulated through conventional ways. *Under the Tongue* is written in a language of metaphors and images and not the intelligible language of plain and simple words and sentences. The language of images and metaphors suit the subject of trauma which is best articulated using this language. Suganthi and Claramma (2016: 233) note that “one of the main characteristics of trauma is its resistance to narrative representation, revealing itself more in a language of symptoms than in a language of words and sentences”.

The articulation of Zhizha’s traumatic experience in *Under the Tongue* is enhanced by the figurative language used in the text. The language is replete with images of the physical world—earth, sea, water, rock, sky, trees, moon, stars, death, light, life and darkness. Suganthi and Claramma (2016: 233) assert that “Zhizha, the child narrator, presents herself as a landscape, as an open territory. Her body language is translated into metaphors of water and stone. Her body/soul/spirit landscape is mainly shaped by a river, her tongue, which hides beneath a belly that has turned into a rock due to fear and defense.”

The traumatic experience of Zhizha is not presented in a logical and coherent manner in *Under the Tongue*. It is presented mainly in the form of memory flashes and disconnected pattern. Commenting on the language of trauma used in *Under the Tongue* in *Reading Girlhood under*

the Tongue, Research in African Literatures, Vol.38, No 2 (2007:36—37), Muponde notes that “Stylistically, the experience of trauma is represented in a series of disconnected, almost stand-alone flashes of memory in which narrative is often impeded in its monological pull towards linearity”. Muponde cites the case of Thandeki Umilo who, in her recalling of her own experience of violation, finds that in such situations of telling the experience of trauma and incest, “{i}t is difficult to write in a chronological or even in a thematic way as death and resurrection are intrinsically intertwined. The story thus unfolds in a rhythm of darkness, foreboding, storm, death and new life”(xii-xiii) in Muponde 2007: 37).

Trauma victims struggle to communicate their traumatic experiences in an intelligible way the first time they try to speak. At first, Zhizha struggles to articulate her traumatic experience in an intelligible language. Her language is incomprehensible, disjointed and incoherent. Murray (2009:8) notes that “readers cannot know whether Zhizha is trying to articulate a dream, a memory, a fantasy or an actual experience. Zhizha’s voice is a voice of trauma: chaotic, confused, contradictory, incoherent and unintelligible”. Her language at this stage reflects the challenges victims of trauma experience when dealing with the traumatic experience. For the child heroine Zhizha, it is worse because she has not yet sufficiently developed mechanisms that can enable her to cope with trauma. The difficulty with which she initially speaks reflects the manner in which trauma initially speaks. Leigh Gilmore (2001:7 in Murray 2008: 8) notes that these unintelligible utterances reflect the “unconscious language of repetition through which trauma initially speaks” and which is characterized by “flashbacks, nightmares, and emotional flooding”.

The language of Zhizha reflects the traumatized condition she is in. She is anxious, insecure and uneasy. Her language also reveals her innocence. Langa (2003: 13) notes that the language of the little protagonist helps to bring out a sense of innocence, thereby heightening the sympathy for her and the staccato arrangement of some of the sentences enhances the uncertainty, anxiety, fear and insecurity experienced by Zhizha (p 5, 9—10, 20—23). Zhizha’s language evokes sympathy but also reflects the confused state she is in.

Under the Tongue is a narrative of girl child trauma. The novel offers discourse which contests the silencing of narratives of violated and traumatized subjects and its setting at the height of the country’s political liberation struggle shows the importance of highlighting these

narratives which are usually overshadowed by masculine narratives of nationalism. The text articulates the thorny subject of incest and explores the cultural aspects which silence these narratives. It reveals that the issue of incest is often shrouded in mystery and secrecy because it is viewed as a taboo subject in the society and the fact that the perpetrators of this crime are usually close family members mean the cases are often not reported. Vera explores the psychic traumatic experiences of Zhizha and shows how difficult it is for a child to cope with trauma. The novel also shows that trauma presents challenges in its narration as it cannot be presented in conventional ways and so reveals that it is best articulated in a language of images and metaphors. Vera asserts the importance of articulating traumatic experiences in order for the victims to recover and heal and stresses the importance of a support system.

4.4 POSTCOLONIAL TRAUMA IN VERA'S THE STONE VIRGINS

The Stone Virgins is a narrative of postcolonial trauma in postcolonial Zimbabwe and is set in the postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident era (1980—1985). Zimbabwe attained its political independence from Britain in 1980. However, soon after the attainment of political independence, armed conflicts broke out between Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the military wings of the two major Zimbabwe political parties which fought for its independence—Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) respectively (Brits 1995:281—285). This postcolonial Zimbabwe period of armed conflict from 1980—1985 is referred to as the dissident movement. In this novel, Vera articulates individual and national trauma which has not been openly and freely acknowledged and dealt with in the public space and discourse. Vera offers discourse that challenges the silencing of women narratives by masculine narratives of nationalism which tend to glorify male glory. Kizito Muchema('Thoughts on History' 195) cautions that "official history is selective and supportive of the status quo and notes that Zimbabwean fiction creates spaces in which 'official narratives of the past' can be contested and re-created" (Murray2011:155). Vera's *The Stone Virgins* opens space to deal with trauma resulting from atrocities of the dissident era and provides closure traumatized individuals and the nation.

The novel articulates the heinous crime committed on innocent civilians and explores the physical scars and deep psychological trauma of individuals and whole communities through

the tragic stories of Thenjiwe and Nonceba, the two Gumede sisters from Ngezi outside Bulawayo in Matabeleland who are beheaded, sexually violated and mutilated respectively by the dissident Sibaso and the burning down of Thantabanthu store and the cold-blood killing of the storekeeper. These tragic stories mirror the atrocities committed to civilians in the areas affected by the dissident movement in Matabeleland during this period.

Vera's fiction offers discourse which contests the silencing of narratives of violated and traumatized subjects. Sibaso decapitates Theniwe and sexually violates Nonceba before mutilating her lips. The mutilation of Nonceba's lips is to ensure that she will remain silent forever. Just like in all her other novels I have discussed in this thesis, Vera explores the theme of sexually violated and traumatized subjects in *The Stone Virgins* in a violent environment against the background of a patriarchal society to show that women bear the brunt of violence during violent periods because of their gendered status.

The Stone Virgins also investigates the ghastly acts committed on whole communities during this period and explores the traumatic experiences of survivors and those who witnessed the atrocities. In Ngezi, Thantabanthu store is burnt down and the storekeeper, Mahkthini, is cold-bloodedly killed. The civilians are also tortured and killed. The horrible memories of these gruesome killings haunt the survivors and the odor of the charred bodies stay in their minds forever. (p134)

The narrator describes in detail the grisly killing of the storekeeper below:

"First, they shot his legs. It was when he was on the floor that they tore off his clothes and set fire to the plastic bags. They sliced and emptied container bags of maize meal from the store and used those to separate him from his skin. The soldiers slid pure through the soft mounds of white maize flour and lifeless bodies and blood. With arms powdered, with boots coated with flour, they hooked the plastic bags on metal hangers from which they had recently removed children's uniforms. They tied him up. Then they let the burning emulsion down. On him. The soldiers focused on this one activity with force and intensity, their faces expressionless as they slid plastic after plastic, as they let the liquid flame drop, as they set the place alight...Those who witnessed the goings-on at Thantabantu on this night said Mahlathini howled like a helpless animal. When the sound died, his skin was already perforated like lace. Long before they burned the store down, he had died. Thantabantu store

was razed, bombed to pieces, and silenced. If there are bodies under the rubble, nobody dares to approach the site, to remove each stone and broken brick and count the bones, one by one, to identify which is which; which the vertebrate that make a man stand.” (p133—134)

The narrator further describes the mayhem and what ensued in the following paragraph. The narrator says, ‘On the night of the bombing of Thantabanthu store, some people fled to Bulawayo. Other men were believed to have been forcibly taken kilometres from Kezi, dragged way past the hills of Gulati, deep into campsites where many others were being held, tortured, killed , and buried in mass graves. What followed the series of gun shots, the torture, was a cacophony of sound, which lit the night with its explosion (p135)’.

The narrator gives an account of another bizarre incident in which the soldiers force a woman to axe her husband while her two sons watch. The narrator says: ‘Two soldiers walked into her house and sat her husband on a stone. They handed her an axe. These men were pointing guns at her two grown sons, threatening to shoot them if she did not listen. She fell on her knees and begged them to let her sons go. One soldier pushed her away with the butt of his gun. She fell down and wept for her sons as though they had already died, and for the heart of the soldier, which she said had died with the war. Her husband raised his voice toward her and said, “Kill me...Kill me” He was desperate to die and to save his two sons. She stood up, silently repeating what her husband had said, with her own lips, with her own arms. She opened her eyes and raised the axe above her shoulders till he was dead. That is what happened to her. The men left her in that state. A dead husband and two living sons’(pages 88).

In her fiction, Vera shows the perpetrators and victims are all deeply traumatized subjects. The characters depicted in *The Stone Virgins* are traumatized subjects—the victims and perpetrators and those witnessed the grisly and ghastly acts. Trauma theorists argue that trauma victims go through processes of working out and working through after a traumatic experience. According to LaCapra (2001:6), the process of working out is shown when the traumatized person experiences dreams, nightmares, flashbacks, illusions or hallucinations of the traumatic event. The process of acting out is also identified when the victim tries to re-experience the traumatic event.

Nonceba is deeply traumatized by watching the horrifying and disturbing scene of her sister when she is beheaded by Sibaso. She constantly has visions and dreams of the horrific and traumatizing experience of the axe-falling. She has visions about the axe falling through the arms of the women. She moves her arms forward to protect the women but her arms are tied to the bed so she cannot move and offer any help (p89). Memories of the beheading of Thenjiwe are also engraved on her mind as the narrator remarks in the following lines: ‘... No one had died in her presence and made such an absolute claim on her memory; she had not been involved; her voice had not yet called out to the dead. Now she is in an abysmal place, inert, held down. She is mute (pages 90—91).

The women who axed her husband and the children who watched the horrendous act are all deeply traumatized subjects. This is the same with Kezi residents who watched the cold-blood killing of the storekeeper and the civilians. These horrendous events will haunt their memories forever. Sibaso, the dissident, rapist and mutilator is a traumatized subject too. Just like the incestuous rapist Muroyiwa in *Under the Tongue* who has a troubled past and the rapist guerrilla fighter in *Without a Name*, Sibaso is a man traumatized by the war that he has been involved in. A woman who is forced to axe her husband wept for the heart of the soldier which she said had died with the war. (p89) Sibaso’s heart has died with the war too.

The Stone Virgins is a narrative of postcolonial trauma. It articulates traumatic experiences in the postcolonial dissident context. The novel shows that women were vulnerable to sexual abuse in violent postcolonial period because of their gendered status. In this novel, just like in all her other novels, Vera shows that both perpetrators and victims are deeply traumatized subjects. Sibaso who decapitates Thenjiwe and sexually abuses Nonceba before mutilating her lips has a troubled past just. Vera shows that traumatized subjects continue to be deeply affected by traumatic experiences as they constantly experience visions, flashbacks and dreams of the horrifying scenes they witnessed. *The Stone Virgins* works out postcolonial trauma through the tragic stories of Thenjiwe and Nonceba and the burning down of a shop and the cold-blood killing of the storekeeper and other people.

4.5 COLONIAL AND RACIAL TRAUMA IN DANGAREMBGA’S THE BOOK OF NOT

The Book of Not is a narrative of colonial and racial trauma. The novel is set during the period of white minority rule in Zimbabwe (then known as Rhodesia) up to the attainment of political

independence and majority government in 1980. In this book, Dangarembga articulates colonial and racial traumatic experiences from the perspective of Tambudzai Sigauke and the other black students she learns with and shares the same dormitory with at Sacred Heart, a racially segregated convent.

Written in *medias res* narrative technique, the events are narrated by Tambudzai Sigauke who is also the protagonist of the story. The novel opens with a frightening scene in which a female guerrilla's leg (Tambu's young sister, Netsai, who has joined the liberation struggle) is blown up after stepping on a landmine at a *morari* (night meeting) convened by the freedom fighters to discipline Babamukuru (Tambu's uncle and benefactor) who is accused of being a sellout. This incident is captured rhythmically in the opening sentence of the book: 'Up, up, up, the leg is spun. A piece of person, up there in the sky.' (p3). Netsai's leg spins and hooks in a branch of a tree where it continues to bleed (p4) as Babamukuru is being brutally beaten with a sjambok by VanaMukoma (The Big Brothers) while Tambu and the villagers hopelessly watch.

Dangarembga portrays her characters as deeply traumatized subjects. They are forever haunted by memories of the heinous and horrendous events they have witnessed and they go through a process of working out. LaCapra (2001:6) notes that the process of working out is shown when traumatized subjects experience dreams, nightmares, flashbacks, illusions or hallucinations of the traumatic events they have experienced. This is also shown when the traumatized person tries to re-experience the event. Tambu is so traumatized by the horrifying scene at the night gathering that she constantly experiences visions and dreams long after the event. The villagers who attended the night gathering are also deeply traumatized just like the residents of Ngezi are deeply traumatized by the brutality and cold-blood killing of the storekeeper and other civilians when Thandabanthu store is burnt down in *The Stone Virgins*.

Tambu's traumatic experiences mirror the situation of many people in the country who witnessed grisly and ghastly colonial and war atrocities. By articulating the experiences of Tambu, Dangarembga's fiction works out colonial and racial trauma of the whole nation. Thus her fiction, just like that of Vera I have discussed in the other sections of this thesis, provides a lens to work through the gross war traumatic experiences individuals and the whole nation went through. As Milazzo (2016:136) rightly observes, "discussions about racism are not

merely intellectual endeavors but a means to work through traumatic histories and lived experiences of oppression.”

Tambu is told by her mother before the evening of the night gathering not to say to anyone whatever she sees or hears at the *morari*. She tells her: “Whatever it is, do not say anything. Just sing, whatever the song, sing it. And answer as everyone else does. Otherwise, be quiet.” Tambu tries to shut her senses for fear of the fact she will record the events at the *morari*. She says: “I tried not to look, so I would not make the mistake of saying I had seen anything when I returned to school. I tried not to hear so I would never repeat the words of war anywhere” (p12—13).

Tambu also tries not to know whose voice is singing lest she recognizes the person. The instruction to Tambu by her mother not to tell what she has seen or heard at the *morari* is an attempt to silence these narratives of violence and trauma in the historical setting of the novel. By narrating these war atrocities, Dangarembga, like Vera, explodes the silence which has been imposed on these narratives in the social and historical contexts in which her novel is set.

The brutal beatings and the blowing off of Netsai’s leg and its spinning and hooking on a branch of a tree where it continues to bleed are scenes which are too horrifying to be watched by anyone. Thus Tambu describes the *morari* as a place where fear paralyses the heart (p27). In the following lines she describes war imagery that evokes great fear in her and other witnesses: “I sat now in the depths of the machine that brought death to people, and I was intolerably petrified to be in the belly of the beast that belched war...This fighting, and the limbs and the fluids and the excreta that it scattered over the land, intoxicated the men and women and youth and children who had come to be told we were all, together with the guerrillas, the sacrifice of whose blood justice was purchased.” (p12) The war images of limbs, fluids and excreta which scattered over the land are symbolic of the widespread destruction caused by the war.

Dangarembga exposes the severe physical and psychological damage caused to individuals and the whole nation during the violent colonial period and wartime in her writing. The extent of these damages is symbolized by images of broken objects and cracks. While wondering around the rural homestead before going to the *morari*, Tambu looks at objects which have

been broken and cannot be fixed because the force of wholeness has abdicated. She remarks: “I touched this –a broken upturned wheelbarrow beaten to lace by wind and rain—examined that—the twisted axel of a scotch cart—the things that break and cannot be fixed because the force of wholeness has abdicated. It was surprising to see how little there was to remind me that I had lived here for twelve years of my childhood. In the absence of anchoring, I shuffled and picking up a half-seeded maize cob and throwing the grains to the chickens, as though nothing had happened ” (p9).

The broken objects and cracks symbolize the severe physical and psychological damage caused by the ravaging war to individuals and the nation which cannot be mended. The tale also captures this idea of the damage done to individuals and the nation which cannot be mended by Tambu’s description of her family members as people who cannot become whole again and by her description of her young sister, Netsai, as a piece of person (p30). The images of broken images, pieces of flesh and limbs of legs show war scars and the psychic damage the war caused to individuals and the whole nation. They are symbolic of how deeply traumatized victims and witnesses of these heinous and horrific scenes are.

The extent of the damage of colonial and wartime atrocities to people is seen in how Tambu continues to be haunted by the heinous and horrific scenes she watched at the *morari* even when she has returned to school. When she goes back to Sacred Heart, a racially segregated multiracial private school where she and other African students—Ntombizethu (Ntombi), Irene, Anastasia, Benhilda, Patience and Cynthia learn, she constantly experiences dreams and visions of the grisly *morari* scene. At school, she is under immense pressure to excel in her academics and attain an honour roll but visions of the horrific *morari* scene constantly haunt her.

Tambu constantly experiences visions of the *morari* night when Netsai, her young sister, stepped on a landline and her leg was blown off. She captures moments when she is haunted by these visions of her young sister while she is in class in the following lines: “Now, being there on a copper plate was even more necessary: it was as that name so perfectly inscribed couldn’t be blown off so jaggedly, just like that, not in the middle of a night, nor in the middle of anything. But now, after a leg was blown off she came walking backwards over those stones of learning and concentration, hop-hop-hopla because she had only one leg. I could see her

clearly as I sat in class, my mind opening to the teacher. It was a woman. It was my sister. Would the honour hold its promise? I could not concentrate. Whenever I focused, the woman stepped back, groaning too many questions.” (p28)

She also experiences these visions of Netsai during Sister Catherine’s Latin lesson. The mention of soldiers in the Latin sentence being translated into English triggers the horrible memories of the war and that of her injured young sister. She stops paying attention so as to block the vision of Netsai. She remarks: “This morning, towards the end of class, Sister paused. I wasn’t looking at anything or anyone in the classroom. I was preventing the appearance of the hopping woman who was a girl. By not paying attention I was making her not come down the mountain...I could tell I was too tired to keep my balance sufficiently to make sense of the Latin phrases, as I was enervated from forcing, for the better part of the morning, everything out of my mind, in case that woman was my sister came hopping down on the stepping stones of attention. The silence went on for a long time while I vacillated between being in the class and not being there, and Sister and the rest of the class waited.” (p29—30)

The image of her injured sister cannot depart from Tambu’s mind and she cannot flee away from these thoughts no matter how hard she tries. She describes her dilemma in the following lines: “This time I wanted to put my hand up even before Sister asked me. But that would mean I had to open my eyes. They were closed against dark green pine and wattle plantations on the mountain slopes, and the great tracts of burnt bush beside them, green growth oxidized to ash the better to see those people whose legs were to be blown off. If I opened my eyes, I would end up turning my head. Mesmerized I might forget and the tear might fall. If I kept the eyes closed, I would not do well, rather face a lifetime of being nothing, like Mai. This is because of my sister... And didn’t my sister see how able such people were, which meant her own leg was in danger of being blown off...Ha!.. Those thoughts crept up on you just like that, even when you weren’t thinking them. You just couldn’t flee far enough; they always insinuated.” (p30—31) Any slight incident triggers horrific memories of her injured young sister. Even quarrels and fights which flare up in the dormitory with the other students end up in Tambu shouting Netsai’s name. (p78)

The Book of Not also explores the psychological effects of colonial and racial ideologies on black subjects. These ideologies portrayed blacks as uncivilized and inferior to whites. Tambu

confesses during one of the visions of her injured young sister in the following lines: “Besides, I suffered secretly a sense of inferiority that came from having been at the primitive scene. Being a student at the Young Ladies’ College of the Sacred Heart, I possessed images from the school’s films and library: cavemen dragging their women where they wanted them by their hair of bludgeoning their prey. And in the final analysis there was everyone, sitting mesmerized and agreeing about the appropriateness of this behaviour...It was as if a vital part had been exploded away and in the absence that was left I was cracked and defective, as though indispensable parts leaked, and I could not gather energy.” (p28)

Tambu and the other African students at the racially polarized convent are disparaged and dehumanized because of their race and underprivileged backgrounds and in consequence suffer racial trauma. Racism propagates ideas and values which view whites as a superior race and this engenders feelings of racial inferiority among black students at Sacred Heart. Racial trauma produces feelings of inferiority and self-blame among black students at the institution and this makes black students obsessed with the idea to create a good impression to the whites. The blacks are affected by being disparaged and this has a huge affect on their image of themselves and self-esteem. As a result, they have a sense of worthlessness.

Blacks and whites avoid physical contact at Sacred Heart. When this accidentally happens, blacks are filled with a sense of shame. Tambu feels a deep sense of shame when she gets in physical contact with Sister Catherine and during the incident of the tug of war with the sheet with the matron in the dormitory. Tambu remarks: “Now shame came crushing down on me. I was appalled at having let my skin and this white person’s touch. A dentist could see a person tremble in agony and not touch. A doctor could watch a person dissolve into death and not touch. This could happen because it was taboo: this person and that one could not touch. The army did its work aseptically, with grenades and landmines and bullets. So my first impression was I had soiled my teacher in some way. I liked her and I did not want to do that. Sister should not touch me. I started with all my muscles to pull away. I was horrified to see my hand disobedient and motionless”(p32). Aime Cesaire (1994:173 in Murray2011:137) argues that between the colonizer and colonized, there is an “infinite distance” that does not allow space for any “human contact”. (1994:173).

The chasm caused between the races at the institution is also explored through the events in the dining room and at assembly where there should be no physical contact between black and white students and they should not share anything. The Nesquik drama in the dining hall makes Tambu almost forget to breathe and she is extremely afraid that Ntombi might touch Bougainvillea's chocolate container (p38). At assembly, black students take necessary precautions to avoid physical contact with white students as their skin and theirs should not come in contact" (p50). The idea that black students have internalized ideas of inferiority is seen by the fact that they see themselves as less worthy or important than whites and they display a lack of self worth as shown especially by Tambu.

The students at Sacred Heart are traumatized by the atrocities and brutalities of the war as they all have unpleasant war memories. Tambu describes her dormitory mates as all having little boxes tight in their chests for their memories of war and adds that there is too much grief for a room of girls. (p32) The students are also traumatized by horrendous images of the raging war shown to them at assembly by Sister Emmanuel. She brings copies of the Rhodesian Herald which have the horrendous images of the body of Mr Swanepoel with an axe in its head at the assembly and distributes them to the learners to see. Later, she makes an announcement of the death of Mrs Swanepoel to the learners (p129—130). She adds that Kim and Katherine Swanepoel were subjected to unspeakably obscene horrors during the holiday. (p130)

The Book of Not explores colonial and racial trauma. Dangarembga articulates the physical and psychological damages caused by war violence on victims and the nation as a whole. The extent of the physical and psychic damage caused by colonial and war violence which cannot be fixed is symbolized by the images of broken images which cannot be fixed. The colonial and war damage and scars are also symbolized by the broken limbs and pieces of flesh in the novel. Dangarembga also explores trauma caused by colonial and racial ideologies in her novel and shows how this produces feelings of inferiority among the black students at Sacred Heart.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I focused on Yvonne Vera's novels—*Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins* as well as *The Book of Not* by Tsitsi Dangarembga which work out racial,

colonial and postcolonial trauma. First I discussed the articulation of colonial and war trauma in *Without a Name*. My discussion revealed that Vera sets her novel in a violent colonial environment against the background of patriarchy to show that women bear the brunt of violence during turbulent times because of their gendered status. I argued that *Without a Name* works out colonial and war trauma through the tragic stories of the violent and brutal rape of Mazvita by a guerrilla fighter and the burning down of the whole village as the war rages. Then I analyzed *Under the Tongue* which articulates the traumatic experiences of sexually violated minors in a violent colonial setting during wartime through the tragic story of the incestuous rape of Zhizha by her father. I revealed that narratives of incest are often silenced because the subject is viewed as taboo in the society and there is not freely talked about and that the perpetrators of this crime are usually close family members and therefore the cases are seldom reported. Next, I focused on *The Stone Virgins* which articulates postcolonial trauma from the perspective of the tragic story of Thenjiwe and Nonceba who are decapitated, sexually abused and mutilated respectively by the dissident Sibaso. Lastly, I focused on *The Book of Not* which works out racial and postcolonial trauma. I showed that Dangarembga explores the severe physical and psychological damage caused to victims and witnesses of the colonial and war horrendous atrocities. I revealed that the book makes use of images of broken objects which cannot be fixed and war imagery of broken limbs and pieces of human flesh to reveal the extent of both the physical and psychic damage of colonial and racial trauma to individual victims and the nation as a whole. This chapter also discussed the challenges of narrating trauma and established that it cannot be narrated through conventional literary strategies but that it is best articulated using the language of images and metaphors. I also showed that Vera depicts both perpetrators and victims as traumatized subjects.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the research. I look at the objectives, research questions and hypothesis of the research outlined in chapter 1. Then I will analyze the research findings in chapter 2 which focused on gender, colonial and racial oppression of women (and girls) and the ways of championing women social emancipation and voice in Dangarembga's fiction in the postcolonial contexts. I will show that Dangarembga highlights these underlying factors which cause female oppression, subordination and the silencing of their narratives and voice and argues that these factors account for the inequalities inherent in the social and economic systems in the postcolonial context in which her fiction is set. Next,

I look at chapter 3 which focused on sexually violated subjects and retrieval of these narratives in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. Then I will look at chapter 4 which focused on representation of colonial, war and racial trauma by Vera and Dangarembga. I will highlight the challenges of representing trauma established in the research. Lastly, I look at the recommendations of this research in light of the findings made.

5.2 CONCLUSION

In this research I focused on the representation of marginalized voices and trauma in the selected fiction of Vera and Dangarembga from womanist/African feminist, gender and postcolonial theoretical paradigms. Chapter 1 set out the objective of the research and outlined the research methodology, hypothesis and research questions guiding the research. I explained the choice and rationale of using the qualitative methodology as a vehicle for data collection, analysis and interpretation. I explained that my choice of this methodology was informed by the nature of my research which is probing how women are marginalized and oppressed and their discourses silenced by different oppressive systems in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. The data for this research was gathered by reading the novels of the authors I analyzed, academic journals, articles and papers presented at seminars which have a bearing on my research topic.

In chapter 2, I focused on gender, colonial, racial and class oppression of women (and girls) in *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not* and discussed the innovative ways women use to champion social emancipation and achieve voice. I discussed the novels of Dangarembga from womanist/African feminist, gender and postcolonial theoretical perspectives. These ideologies offer a broad framework within the African context to analyze African women fiction. The ideologies acknowledge that the struggle for women emancipation should not necessarily focus on sexual domination and subjugation alone but should be broadened to include other socio-economic factors in the greater society. Vera and Dangarembga offer discourses which critique all factors which oppress, subordinate and marginalize women and their voices.

The research established that Dangarembga foregrounds women discourse in *Nervous Conditions* and its sequel, *The Book of Not* from a gender perspective which critiques all the underlying factors for women oppression and subordination in the colonial and postcolonial

settings and these are gender, class and race. The reading of Dangarembga's fiction revealed that gender, class and racial oppression of women account for the inequalities inherent in the social and economic systems and that failure to address them will perpetuate the subordinate and marginalization of women as the story of Tambudzai Sigauke (the narrator and protagonist of *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not* reveals.

Dangarembga asserts that gender is the basis on which women (and girls) are oppressed and marginalize and argues that colonial and racial oppression compounds their situation. Tambu is victimized on the grounds of her gender when she is forced to adjourn her primary education and she is further discriminated by Babamukuru when he chooses Nhamo over her to go and learn at the mission where there are good facilities. She only gets an opportunity for education after the tragic death of Nhamo hence her declaratory statement at the outset of her argument that: 'I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness, as you may define it, my lack of feeling' (NCp1).

The fact that Tambu only gets her opportunity for education after the death of her brother forms the basis of Dangarembga's argument in this book that gender is the basis on which women are oppressed and marginalized and that colonial and racial oppression compounds their situation. Tambu wins a scholarship to study at The Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart, a prestigious multiracial private school, but only two places are on offer for all the African Grade Seven girls in the country. On arrival she and the few African girls suffer racial segregation and prejudice through the unjust discriminatory racial policies of the school and the whole colonial education system. She excels in her O' Level examinations and she proceeds to study for A' Levels. Her school experiences a shortage of teachers and makes an arrangement for science students to be transported daily to Umtali Boys High School for lessons but she is not allowed to join the other white students because black students are not allowed at the premises of government institutions. Consequently, Tambu fails her A Level examinations. The story of Tambu mirrors the realities of black students in the social and historical settings of the book as well as in some Third World countries.

The chapter also discussed the innovative ways used by women in Dangarembga's fiction to champion their emancipation and voice. My discussion revealed that the women depicted in Dangarembga's fiction speak up against their oppressive situations and those of other women

in, in so doing, achieve social emancipation and voice. Dangaremba constructs strong and bold female characters who speak up against oppressive ideologies and social injustice. These women are able to rise above their circumstances and change the world around them. Tambu rejects the world constructed for women by the patriarchal system and the destiny it prescribes for them when she refuses to listen to her father when he tells her not to worry about going back to school and suggests that she should stay at home and learn to cook, clean and grow vegetables.

Lucia speaks out against her patriarchal oppression and that of her Tambu and her mother and uses her skills to convince Babamukuru to get her a job at the mission. Unlike her sister, Ma'shingayi, whose social and economic conditions remain unchanged, she is able to change her personal circumstances. Nyasha, the most rebellious of female characters constructed by Dangaremba speaks out against all forms of oppression and injustices women suffer and she constantly criticizes her mother for sacrificing herself by not making the best of herself.

In Chapter 3, I focused on Vera's narratives of violated subjects—*Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins*. I showed that *Without a Name* explores narratives of colonial and war violated subjects from the perspective of the tragic stories of the brutal rape of Mazvita by a guerrilla freedom fighter and that of the burning village and reveals that women bear the brunt of violence in a violent environment because of their gendered status.

I discussed *Under the Tongue* and showed that it articulates narratives of sexually abused female children in a colonial period during wartime from the perspective of the tragic incestuous rape of Zhizha by her father. The discussion revealed that Vera explores the violent sexual abuse of Zhizha during colonial and wartime to reveal a culture of the violent brutal rape of children which is entrenched in the society and reveal the vulnerability of children to sexual abuse when the social and family systems are broken.

The chapter also focused on *The Stone Virgins* and showed that the book articulates narratives of sexually violated subjects in the postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident era and showed that women bear the brunt of violence in a violent environment because of their gendered status. The chapter reveals that narratives of violated subjects are silenced by patriarchy, colonialism and masculine narratives of nationalism. I argued that Vera offers discourses which contest the silencing of these narratives through the tragic stories of the protagonists of her novels.

Chapter 4 focused on narratives of colonial and war trauma, female child trauma, postcolonial trauma and colonial and racial trauma in *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins* by Yvonne Vera and *The Book of Not* by Tsitsi Dangarembga respectively.

Firstly, I analyzed *Without a Name* which works out colonial and war trauma through the tragic story of the violent and brutal rape of Mazvita by a guerrilla fighter. I discussed the challenges of narrating trauma and showed that trauma presents challenges as it cannot be articulated using conventional literary strategies. The discussion also revealed that trauma victims act out their traumatic experiences and this is shown when Mazvita experiences dreams, nightmares and flash backs. Trauma victims must also give a traumatic experience a place in the history of their lives so that they can recover and heal. This is shown when Mazvita identifies the land as acting in complicity with the rapist and transfers the hate to it. I revealed that the flash back technique is used in *Without a Name* and that the traumatic events are presented in a dream-like form and argued that these literary strategies are suitable for the subject of trauma being articulated in the book.

I then discussed *Under the Tongue* and showed that it works out female child trauma in colonial and wartime period. The discussion revealed the challenges of narrating trauma and showed that the case of Zhizha is complicated by the fact that she loses her speech and memory after the violent incestuous rape by her father. The discussion showed that it is important for victims of trauma to articulate their traumatic experiences so that they can recover and heal and memory is crucial. My discussion of trauma and traumatic experiences in this chapter also revealed the importance of intervention to assist trauma victims to recover and heal. The intervention of Grandmother is instrumental in Zhizha's recovery of memory and the arrival of her mother later is crucial in her recovery of speech. The discussion also revealed that trauma representation presents challenges as it cannot be articulated using conventional ways and an intelligible language of simple words and sentences. I argued that the language of images which *Under the Tongue* is written in suits the subject of trauma being articulated. The discussion also revealed that traumatic experiences are not articulated in a logical and chronological way at first and that the challenges of speaking Zhizha experiences at first reflect the initial form in which trauma speaks.

The chapter also analyzed *The Stone Virgins* which articulates postcolonial trauma from the perspective of the tragic story of the decapitation of Thenjiwe and the sexual violation and mutilation of Nonceba by Sibaso respectively. The discussion revealed that the book articulates atrocities which were committed on individuals and the whole communities during the postcolonial Zimbabwe dissident era and explores the traumatic experiences of the victims and those who witnessed the heinous ghastly acts. I argued that *The Stone Virgins* works out postcolonial trauma through these tragic stories of Thenjiwe and Nonceba and that of the burning of Thanthabanthu store and the cold-blood killing of the storekeeper, Mahlathini, and other residents of Ngezi. The book also explores the ways traumatized subjects act out such as experiencing dreams and visions of the ghastly acts they have experienced as Nonceba does. My analysis of Vera's fiction revealed that Vera portrays perpetrators and victims as traumatized subjects. The guerrilla fighter who brutally rapes Mazvita in *Without a Name* is a traumatized subject, Muroyiwa who incestuously rapes his daughter in *Under the Tongue* has a troubled past and Sibaso who decapitates Thenjiwe, sexually rapes and mutilates Nonceba respectively in *The Stone Virgins* also has a troubled past.

Lastly, I analyzed *The Book of Not* by Dangarembga which deal with colonial and racial trauma from the perspective of Tambu and the students at Sacred Heart. I revealed that the book articulates colonial and war atrocities and explores the traumatic experiences of the victims and witnesses of the atrocities. The book explores the extent of the physical and psychological damage suffered by victims through the images of broken objects which cannot be fixed and war imagery of broken limbs and pieces of flesh. The discussion revealed that traumatized subjects experience dreams and visions of the horrifying experiences they are subjected to. In the novel, Tambu constantly experiences dreams and visions of the terrifying scene when her young sister's leg is blown off by a landmine at the *morari*. The book also explores racial trauma which is shown by the black students feeling inferior when they are in the presence of the whites, their avoidance of physical contact with them and the obsession with the idea to please the whites as Tambu does. The research has established that literature can be used a vehicle to work out trauma by opening spaces which allow the articulation of traumatic experiences in spite of the fact that some critics question the extent to which it is effective in working out trauma.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research recommends that the womanist/African feminist, gender and postcolonial theories are ideal paradigms to evaluate African-authored texts because of the following factors:

- *They are Afrocentric and so provide a good framework within which creative works written by African writers can be comprehensively analyzed without some issues being misconstrued.

- *The theoretical models recognize that the struggle for emancipation of women should not solely focus on their patriarchal domination but should be broadened to include other factors such as race and class so as to achieve total liberation for them.

- *The African feminism/womanism, gender and postcolonial theories acknowledge the social and historical factors which affect African women and so offer a broad frame work within which creative works written by black women writers can be analyzed.

- *The trauma theories used in the analysis of Vera and Dangarembga's narratives of trauma provide an ideal and broad framework to analyze colonial, war, racial and postcolonial trauma.

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